

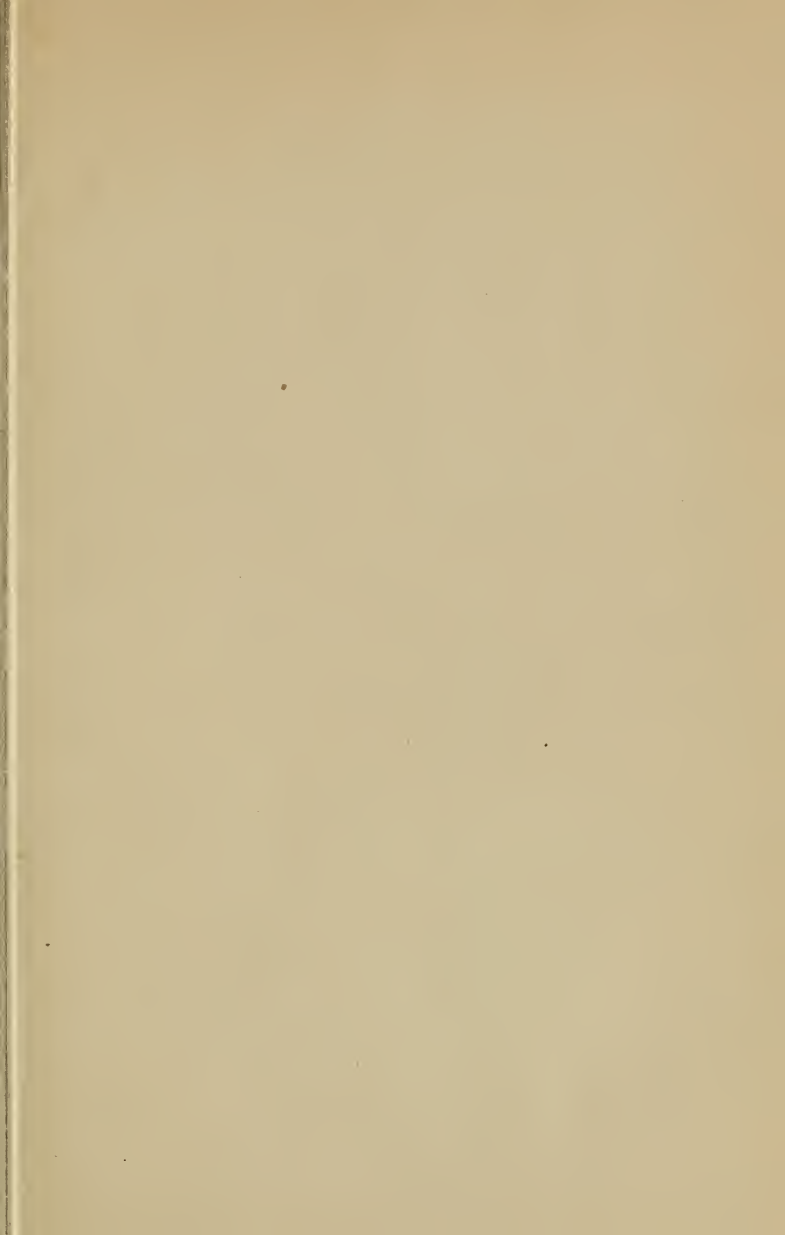


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SALVATION SOUGHT IN EARNEST.

SALVATION SOUGHT IN EARNEST:

A SERIES OF SERMONS,

SHOWING

The Way and the Wisdom

OF SECURING ETERNAL LIFE.

BY REV. WILLIAM BACON.



NEW YORK:
MILLER, ORTON & CO.
1857.

STEREOTYPED BY WILLIAM J. MOSES

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P R E F A C E .

As Christ "came not into the world to call the righteous but sinners to repentance;" as "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance;" as the impenitent for whom Christ died, are far more numerous than those who are already passed from death unto life; as the conversion and salvation of sinners is much more important than the growth of Christians in grace and knowledge, the main object of the minister should be, to persuade men to "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." His chief aim should be, not to *perfect* the Church as it is, but to add to it many, "such as shall be saved." And to this object, he should give not only the most of his toils, but the most of his anxiety and care. He should labor not only much, but judiciously. For souls are lost, not only by neglect, but by misdirection. Such are the considerations that have led to the following work.

The author has long been of opinion, that many ministers fail to give a proportionate attention to the unconverted portion of their flocks; that important as it is to guard Christians against living lives that discredit the Gospel, and to urge them to perfect holiness in the fear of God, it is still more important, that sinners be instructed, warned and entreated to be "reconciled to God." In his opinion, too, many are more deficient in pointing out the way to life, than

they are as to urging the impenitent to enter it—a deficiency prevailing as much in their publications as in their preaching. He believes therefore, that there should be a greater supply of books, suitable to be put into the hands of those who need to learn the way of life. Hence his aim to increase this supply. Nor has he sought simply to add to its amount; but to furnish, if possible, some more simple and precise instruction as to what the sinner must do in order to be saved. Believing, as he does, that inquiring sinners are often left in needless perplexity, as to the *nature* of repentance and faith, and are much in danger thereby, of failing to find salvation, he has labored to make these conditions of life *fully understood*; and, as in doing so, he has departed much from the usual way of describing these graces, he invites the scrutiny of theologians, not vauntingly, or in defiance of criticism, but with a sincere desire to be corrected, if found to be in error. Yet he hopes he shall not be thought presumptuous for attempting to bring some “things new” out of the treasure of God’s unchanging, yet unexhausted word.

This work may be thought defective, because it contains no article on regeneration. But although the author holds the evangelical views of its nature and necessity, he does not think its introduction here to be needful. Regeneration is the work of God on the human heart; while the object of this volume, is to promote that work which man himself must do to obtain salvation. And when sinners ask what they must do to be saved, they are not told to *be born again*, but to repent and believe. If it be said, they need to know their moral helplessness, and consequent need of renewing grace, his reply is, that there is “a more excellent way.” It is to learn this helplessness by experience, while trying to believe and repent. And while many would tell them, they can do nothing acceptably, till they have a new heart, and bid them pray for the aid of the Spirit, “the more excellent way,” is to urge them at once to the exercise of repentance and faith. For this is the Scriptural method, while the other is not.

The author has not dared to direct sinners *first* to pray for faith, penitence and a new heart, for two reasons. One is, that he does not feel authorized to do so by any precept or example of the word of God. We are taught to pray for the *increase* of these graces, Ps.

51 : 10 ; Mark 9 : 24 ; Luke 17 : 5, but not for the beginning of them. The only answer which we are taught to return to inquirers after the way of life is, "Repent and believe." — Acts 2 : 38 ; 16 : 31. Instead of telling them the first thing to be done, is to pray for a penitent and believing heart, we should tell them, as Peter told Simon Magus, *first* to "repent, and *then* to "pray God, if perhaps the thoughts of their hearts may be forgiven them." — Acts 8 : 22. And if it be objected, that sinners cannot repent or believe, till they have a new heart, and are converted, our reply is, that God understands this difficulty as well as the objector does ; yet he "now commandeth all men every where to repent." — Acts 17 : 30. And the author has thought it safer to follow the teachings of God, than of man.

But his other reason is, that to direct sinners to pray for conversion before they strive to repent and believe, would *hinder* rather than help their salvation. For the most effectual means of persuading them to comply with the conditions of salvation, is to press upon them their *obligations* to comply. This is God's method. He urges their obligation by his commands, and teaches us to do the same. But if instead of this, we teach them that they cannot repent and believe, and urge them to pray for help, we divert their minds from their *responsibility*, to their *inability* ; and thus set them to excusing their impenitence and unbelief.

Nor can the prayers of the unconverted avail them in the least, as regards their inability. For prayer is not a mere form of speech, but an "offering up of our *desires* to God." And what can there be in the real desires of the wicked that is acceptable ? Must not such a "sacrifice of the wicked be an abomination to the Lord ?" — Prov. 15 : 8. Nor would their hypocritical offering of it be less abominable. How vain, then, to think of helping sinners out of their difficulty by telling them to pray. For they need the same grace to pray acceptably, that they do to repent and believe.

The author is also of opinion, that of late there has been much want of directness, solemnity and earnestness, in urging the unconverted to seek salvation — that many ministers seem to regard the plain and fearful warnings of the Bible, as outlandish and obsolete ; or so harsh that they require some softening or polishing circumlocution, to keep them from needlessly offending the refined tastes and

delicate sensibilities of our modern rebels against God. This pointless, powerless mode of preaching, is pronounced by Unitarians, to be a progress and an improvement which *they* have inaugurated. But it is to be feared that this progress is in a wrong direction; for when "the terrors of the Lord" are preached in terms so mild and unmeaning as not to offend the fastidious, they will not make much impression on any. And if this style of preaching has a Unitarian paternity, it seems the more strange, that it finds so many foster-fathers among the Orthodox.

Believing that this want of plainness, directness and power, is one reason why there have been so few conversions for several years past, the author has felt the more anxious to avoid an error which he regards as so ruinous. While endeavoring to abstain from all needless harshness and severity, he has tried to show the impenitent, tenderly, yet honestly and with all fidelity, their real danger; likewise to warn them solemnly, and to entreat them earnestly, to flee from the wrath to come.

The title of this volume was adopted, because the author feels conscious that he has herein *sought in earnest the salvation* of the unconverted, and urged them to *seek it in earnest for themselves*. He believes the work itself will show, that his object has not been merely to minister to the intellectual entertainment of others, much less to make a display of talent. His aim has been, to present to the impenitent, such truths as are most needful to them, and to present them in a clear and cogent manner, for the sole purpose of inclining them to enter into life. As several of the first discourses are intended to awake attention to the subject of salvation, it is hoped the book may be useful to the careless. But it is intended mainly for the thoughtful, or those who are disposed to think seriously on their future welfare, whether such seriousness is occasioned by the providence or the Spirit of God. Such as the work is, it is commended especially to ministers of the Gospel, to Church officers, pious parents, and in fine, to all who would seek the conversion of sinners, that if they approve of it, they would recommend the perusal of it to those especially, who in sickness or other affliction, or in a time of revival, are seriously disposed. For it is hoped that by such means, they may promote the salvation of many souls.

SERMON I.

THE PREVALENCE OF INATTENTION TO RELIGIOUS TRUTH. ITS EVILS, CAUSES AND CURE.

“Attend to know understanding.”—Prov. 4: 1.

The sentiment of this passage is, that if we would know the truth, we must give it a strict attention. But it is astonishing how little the Gospel is really heeded, even by those who sit stately under the sound of it. Many who have heard a whole sermon, are found to know very little of what it contained. And how are we to account for this? It is thus: The mind is capable of carrying forward two or more trains of thought at once. And we are apt to

give more heed to one of these than to the other. The one, then, that is least attended to, must "*suffer*;" especially if it be a difficult one: for then it needs much more attention, in order to be followed successfully. For instance, our work may be so simple, or so familiar to us, that we can pursue it without much effort of attention. Consequently, we can think and converse about other things at the same time. Whereas, if our work be complex, or difficult, it will require nearly all our attention.

And so the mere *reading or hearing of language* is so much a matter of habit, that it requires but little care. The mind can, therefore, easily wander off at random in a reverie, or in a more connected train of thought on a very different subject. But in that case, the *meaning* of what is read or heard is not sufficiently attended to, to be properly understood, or to be even remembered. In such a case, we can trace back the chain of our reasoning, and even of our reverie; but cannot remember

what we have been hearing or reading. In this way, many chapters and many sermons have been almost entirely lost.

Very many are accustomed to lose the meaning of a great share of what they hear. They attend to it only *by snatches*—catching only here and there a portion of the discourse. For, during most of the time, their minds are wandering off on far different subjects. All, even Christians, are liable to err thus; and are, therefore, cautioned to “give the more earnest heed to the things which they hear, lest at any time they should let them slip.” And we shall see that the impenitent are more especially liable to it, on account of their indifference and aversion to religious truth. As this, then, is a very *prevalent error*, it is important to consider its evils, its causes, and its cure.

1. Its Evils. One result of this defective attention to the preaching of the Gospel is, the incorrect, and often the contradictory reports of what is taught in the pulpit. One hearer catches only one part, and another catches

another part of the same discourse, each reporting the portion which he caught, and insisting that what the other reports was not said. Some catch only a part of a paragraph, which "garbled extract" gives, by itself, a very different meaning from what the whole would convey. For instance, if the minister should quote the Bible declaration, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," they who caught only the *latter* clause might report that the preacher (or the Bible) declares *that there is no God*.

Something of this kind once occurred with myself. I stated in the pulpit, that many ministers had been declared to believe "there were infants in hell not a span long;" and added, that I never saw a man who would avow such a belief; and doubted whether such a man could be found: furthermore, that though it *should* be the opinion of *others*, it was far from being *mine*. And yet some of my hearers went away and reported it as my *own* belief, that "there were infants in hell not a span long" — and this report spread far and wide. Nor do

I believe these persons intended to tell a positive falsehood. They caught only the expression, "infants in hell," etc., but not my declarations, that *I* did *not* hold the revolting dogma myself, nor believe that others held it. This shows how important it is, that we listen faithfully to the preaching of the Gospel, lest we give a wrong report of it.

Another evil of listlessness and inattention under the preaching of the Gospel is, the present pain which it occasions. Every one must be well aware, that while he sits under the preaching in which he feels no interest, and to which, therefore, he pays but little attention, the time hangs heavy upon him. He waits with impatience and pain to have the sermon close. There is no estimating how much distress is thus endured in many a congregation. While some are listening with great eagerness, and consequently with much satisfaction to a discourse, and are sorry to have it end; others, while hearing the same sermon, will render themselves wretched by mere indifference and inattention to it.

But these evils hardly deserve the name, when compared with another injury resulting from inattention to the preaching of the Gospel. It is that which relates to the salvation of the soul. We cannot acquire the necessary understanding of divine truth, unless we give an earnest and persevering heed to it. How unwise and unsafe it would be to heed instructions in our *temporal* affairs, as little as many do the preaching of the Gospel. How could a jury decide a case safely, if they gave as little attention to the testimony of the witnesses, and to the exposition of the law, as many do to those instructions which relate to the ruin and recovery of their souls? And how could a man be expected to recover from a critical and dangerous disease, if he gave as little heed to the complex and lengthy directions of his physician, as many give to the instructions of the Gospel respecting the only cure of sin's fatal malady. Yet the salvation of the soul, and the interests of eternity, are immensely more important than the health of the body, or

all the concerns of time. And since the prevailing heedlessness of the impenitent is putting their eternal well-being in awful jeopardy, we should the more seriously consider,

2. Its Causes. One reason why many are so inattentive to the preaching of the Gospel is, they have so little control over their own minds. They lack the power or disposition to concentrate their attention on what they hear, to the exclusion of other objects. This makes it difficult for them to attend long and closely to *any* subject; especially if it be abstruse or complicated. Consequently, they make but slow progress in learning of any kind.

Another, and more pernicious, as well as more prevalent cause is, *indifference*. Many care *nothing*, and others very *little* about religious instruction. Even Christians have far too little interest in it—especially at times. And this it is which makes them so dreamy, yawning, and drowsy in the house of God. I know that such dullness is often occasioned by disease or toil, or the weather. But with all

their lethargy, or weariness and languor, it would be difficult for them to sleep in the house of God, if they felt the worth of his word. There is no sleeping in revivals, nor anywhere else, if the worth of the soul is properly regarded.

Many sinners are so indifferent in regard to the Gospel, that they absent themselves from church altogether; while others go but seldom. And the most of these go for anything else, than for the sake of hearing religious instruction. Some go because they are *required* to go — others because they are *urged* — others out of regard to character — others for the sake of company, or to see certain persons there. And all the good that many aim at, in going to church is, to “while away the time,” or to talk and laugh before and after meeting. And those who go to church for such reasons will rarely listen attentively to divine instruction. And if any do, it is only, perhaps, because they are interested in the rhetoric or logic of the preacher, not because they value the truth which he utters.

But with most of the impenitent, there is not only a strange indifference, but a positive and powerful aversion to Gospel truth. The apostle tells us, "the carnal mind is enmity against God." Sinners, therefore, dislike the Bible, because it brings this hated Being to mind: especially as, when they hear its doctrines and precepts, it reminds them of their guilt and doom. They, therefore, turn instinctively away from it. Christ accordingly says: "Every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd." Usually, too, they have the impression that the Gospel is preached to them mainly for the purpose of paining them with a sight of their guilt and danger. They are, therefore, the more fixed in hating and in shunning it. These *causes* of inattention to the preaching of the Gospel, suggest to us,

3. Its Cure. It is sometimes cured by special visitations of God's providence and Spirit. Often is the sinner's mind arrested and confined to the subject of salvation by loss of health or

property, by distress or danger, or by the conversion or the death of some dear relative or friend. "Adversity" leads men to "consider." Ecc. 7: 14. "For when God's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." — Is. 26: 9. Many can therefore say with the Psalmist: "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." — Ps. 119: 67. Many can look back to some striking or afflictive providence as the means of first arresting and of fixing their attention to the subject of their own salvation.

But often, in the absence of such a providence, does the Spirit of God awaken the sinner's attention, and compel him to "consider his latter end." The state of mind thus produced is usually called *conviction*. But this is rather a loose application of the term; for, in such circumstances, the sinner is often far from being fully convicted, that is, *convinced* of his guilt and danger. But his mind is unusually aroused and interested in the subject of his ex-

posure to wrath, and to his way of escape from it. Usually, though not always, is he considerably alarmed. Not unfrequently are many thus aroused at the same time; which time is therefore called an *awakening* or a *revival*.

We have seen that one reason why many are so inattentive to the preaching of the Gospel is, their want of power and skill in fixing and concentrating their attention to the subject. Although this talent seems to be natural to some, and is most easily acquired in early life, yet it can be acquired, though with more difficulty, in later life. It is the result of energetic and successive *efforts* to withdraw the mind from other objects; and to fix it upon a single subject. This acquirement should be one principal aim in education. Yet it may, and should be attained by many who are excluded, by age or otherwise, from the aids of the school. Such a habit cannot be too carefully cultivated; for, in proportion to its power will be the ease and rapidity with which we can acquire knowledge, human and divine.

Indifference, we have said, is another and more pernicious cause of inattention to the Gospel. And how is this to be removed? It is by *consideration*. We should consider the evils of inattention that have just been alluded to — viz: that it makes us liable to give an incorrect and injurious report of what we have heard, and that it is important for us to hear attentively, lest we slander the preacher, and mislead those to whom we report his declarations. We should consider, too, how tiresome and painful it is to sit indifferent, and listless, and impatient, under the preaching of the Gospel, longing to have the sermon close — how much more comfortable we should feel, if we listened to it attentively. I am no advocate for long sermons. Taking human nature *as it is*, the minister does well to be brief and comprehensive. Still, those who complain so much about “long and tedious discourses,” would seldom do so, if they were not too indifferent about divine truth.

But especially should we consider how profoundly important is the preacher’s theme, and

that it should therefore be immensely interesting. It includes a wide range of wonderful facts and momentous principles. The facts quoted from the Word of God should be as interesting, at least, as those described in the novel and the romance. How is it, then, that so many feel an intense interest in the works of fiction, and none in the more wonderful occurrences and characters of the Word of God? And, if the returned traveller secures such deep and delighted attention, while relating the wonders which he has witnessed, why should not the preacher secure a deeper and more delightful attention, while he recounts the more wonderful transactions, and more momentous truths of the book of God? It is true, that he has not been an eye or an ear-witness of what he relates. Yet, as it is fully substantiated by sufficient proof, it is just as veritable and just as valuable as if his own eye had seen, or his own ear had heard it all.

And much more interesting should the instruction of the pulpit be to us, *because of its high intrinsic worth*. It is not occupied about life-

less matter, nor on the mindless portion of animated nature; but on men, on angels, and on the infinite God. Mental and moral philosophy should be thought by *us* as it was by the ancient heathen philosophers, to be vastly more important than *natural* philosophy; since mind is so much superior to matter. And much more highly should we estimate that *divine* philosophy which treats of the characters and relations of man and his Maker. If we did but duly consider these things, we could not sit indifferent and listless under the word of God.

But, as we have said, *aversion* to the Gospel is another and most powerful cause of inattention to it. And here, too, is consideration needful. If sinners would but duly consider the nature and design of the Gospel, they would see it is neither fitted nor intended to increase their unhappiness, but the very contrary. It reveals the only way in which they can be restored from the ruin and wretchedness of sin to the favor and fellowship of God: the only way in which they can be delivered from the servitude

of Satan "into the glorious liberty of the children of God," saved from the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels; and brought to enjoy a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." They would, on such consideration, see, too, that the purpose for which the Gospel is preached to them, is to secure to them these inestimable benefits; that all the pain which it does inflict is only for the purpose of securing to them the infinitely greater good. For it seeks to show them their guilt and danger only, that they may escape from them, and secure "the peace which passeth all understanding" *here*, and a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" *hereafter*. They should, therefore, consider the ministers of Christ as messengers of "peace and good will to men;" and as sent to warn them of their danger, only because it is a necessary means of saving them from it: For, the Gospel is good news *only*, as it offers salvation from eternal death; yet none would regard or treat it as such, if they did not see their danger.

But one consideration why sinners should cease to be inattentive to the preaching of the Gospel outweighs all others. It is the solemn truth, that unless they do give it an exact and earnest attention, they must perish, and perish under aggravated guilt and woe. Vain all the provisions of mercy by the death of the Son of God; and vain all the invitations and warnings of his Word, to those who will not heed them. If sinners will not attend to the instructions of the Gospel enough to understand them, they must "perish for lack of knowledge." And thus this very Gospel, which should have been "a savor of life unto life," will prove "a savor of death unto death. They should, therefore, resolve, that, however unpleasant the task, they will faithfully "attend to know understanding." Nor is it enough to understand *theoretically* the way of salvation. Unless they *so* attend to the calls and warnings of the Gospel as to "wake out of sleep and arise from the dead," and "flee from the wrath to come," they must perish, however exact and extensive their knowledge of the general plan of salvation by grace.

My fellow sinners, let me entreat you to take this subject home to yourselves, and lay it on your hearts; for it most seriously concerns you. You may have been sitting long under the sound of the Gospel, and may think you know a great deal about the way of salvation; but what you do know will not save you, or it would have done so already. It is to be feared, that all you have acquired is only some general and indefinite ideas of the Gospel system; while much that is *particularly essential* to your salvation you have failed to understand; and failed just because it is especially unwelcome to you. What, then, is most needful to your salvation, you have yet to learn: and learn it you must, or be lost.

But perhaps you are conscious of being still very ignorant of the whole system of religion, and charge your ignorance to the abstruseness of the subject, or to the deficiency of your instructors; whereas it is owing mainly to your inattention, occasioned by your indifference or aversion. "The way of holiness" is of itself so

plain, that "the way-faring men, though fools, need not err therein." While "a sinner seeketh wisdom and findeth it not, knowledge is easy to him that understandeth." It were well if ministers would be more clear and definite in their statements of the way of life. But, imperfect as yours have been, you could doubtless have gained much more instruction from them, had you given them proper attention. Perhaps you are conscious, that while your ministers have been teaching you your exposure to divine wrath, and your only way of escape from it, you have had very little desire to understand them — or rather, have wished *not* to know what they said; and that what you *have* known you have desired as much as possible to keep out of mind. If you had heard any other instruction with equal indifference and aversion, you would have known very little about it. And do you expect to escape, though you continue on in this same course? You cannot do it. No: you will find the God of salvation *then* and then *only*, "when you search for him *with all your heart.*" Stop,

therefore, before you venture one step farther in your present career, stop and reflect, that such a course can lead you nowhere but to the pit of woe.

See that sick man, with his sunken eye, his hollow cough, and emaciated form. He is gasping for breath on the very verge of life. Physicians and friends are anxious to converse with him respecting his disease, for the purpose of removing it, and thus of saving him from an early grave. But he manifests not merely an indifference toward their kind desires and efforts, but a positive opposition. He is annoyed by them, as officious and impertinent. He wishes to be left alone, to comfort or to cure himself, by trying to fancy that no fatal disease is assailing him. And what do you think of that man? "Oh," you say, "he must be deranged." Sinner, that man is *yourself*. A disease more deadly than leprosy and palsy, consumption and cholera combined, has been long preying upon you. And you know not how soon it may terminate in death eternal. Yet

you are unwilling to consult "the great Physician," who alone can cure you. Nay, you are not willing to hear others recommend him. Surely, then, "madness is in your heart, while you live." And unless you soon change your course, you must soon "go to the dead."

See that prisoner: he is "condemned already," and the "wrath" of offended justice "abideth on him." Yet he heeds not his doom, but is bent on future pleasures, possessions and honors. His friends, and even the guardians of the law, are very anxious and very active to secure his pardon and release. Nay, the Chief Magistrate himself is so anxious to save him in any way that would be safe for his government, that he has already signed, sealed and sent him a pardon. And all he needs now to do, in order to secure his life and enlargement, is to learn its conditions and promise to comply with them: which conditions are, that he cordially accept a pardon on the ground of the merits of another, and heartily resolve to submit entirely to that government, against

which he has hitherto rebelled. But scarcely will he listen to the instrument, while it is read in his hearing. And while his friends urge him to comply with its easy conditions and live, he grows impatient, if not indignant, and wishes them away. Such prisoners are all my impenitent hearers; and yet you are "prisoners of hope," or rather *would* be, if you would "attend to know understanding." The only hopeless feature of your case is, that you are not willing to "know the things which belong to your peace." You are not willing even to enquire for the way in which you can escape from eternal death. And what folly and madness do you thus manifest! If you go down to hell, as it is probable from your present feeling and conduct you will do, one of the most distressing reflections, that will haunt you forever in your dark abode, will be, that you had so many opportunities to find the way of salvation, but would not improve them. Oh save yourselves, I beseech you, from this eternity of anguish, by giving a full and immediate attention to "the only

way of escape from "the perdition of ungodly men."

If you would be wise to life everlasting; the first subject, perhaps, which you would need to consider is, the final doom of the righteous and the wicked; and to this I propose to call your attention in the following discourse.

SERMON II.

WHY GOD DOOMS SOME TO ENDLESS WOE,
AND ADMITS OTHERS TO ETERNAL HAPPINESS:
AND HIS JUSTICE IN SO DOING.

“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”—Matt. 25: 46.

It is often asserted in the Word of God, that he will judge every man according to his works, acquitting those whose works are good, and condemning those whose deeds are evil. Christ accordingly declares, “that they who have done good shall come forth to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.”—John 5: 29. And

these assertions appear to some to conflict with other passages of holy writ — passages asserting that none are saved by their own works. But it is hoped that this seeming contradiction will be found in the present discourse to be completely reconciled.

The text is Christ's declaration, respecting the final doom of the righteous and the wicked. For it stands in connection with that parable in which he describes the final judgment. In this parable he says: "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on the right hand, but the goats on the left." Here, as elsewhere, he calls *himself* "the Son of Man." And he says: "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." So also does Paul speak of him repeatedly as the Judge of the world.

By the sheep is meant the righteous, by the goats, the wicked. And the separation here spoken of must mean that which is to take place at the end of the world: for in making it, Christ "shall say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (verse 34,) and "also unto them on the left hand, Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Then, after giving reasons for these different dooms, he adds in the text, — "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous unto life eternal."

In the original, the Greek word here translated "everlasting," is the same as that translated "eternal." Both mean *endless*. But as some deny the endless punishment of the wicked, it may not be amiss to mention briefly, in passing, some of the reasons relied upon "to prove its unlimited duration." 1. The literal meaning of the word translated "*everlasting*" and "*eternal*" is, *always being*; and when used to signi-

fy anything short of this, it is used *figuratively*: as when we say, "such a man is an endless talker." 2. If this word does not mean *endless*, no other word in the Greek can express it. 3. Endless duration is its *most obvious* meaning: consequently, it is universally so understood. 4. Christ well knew that it would be thus generally understood; and if he did not mean to teach endless punishment, he would have used a different phraseology. 5. He foresaw that this word, being so understood, must excite much painful fear. And if such fear were groundless, both his benevolence and veracity would have prevented his use of this word in this and the like passages.

But I propose, on this occasion, to discuss two momentous questions.

1. Why the wicked are sentenced to endless punishment, and the righteous to endless happiness: and also,

2. Wherein is God *just*, in pronouncing such different dooms.

1. *Why*, then, does he banish one class to

hell, and admit the other to heaven? In the context (v. 34-36) Christ says he admits the one to his kingdom, because they fed him (or rather his ministers and people) when hungry, gave him drink when thirsty, clothed him when naked, and visited him when sick or imprisoned. He says, too, (v. 41-3,) that he bids the other to depart into everlasting punishment, because they failed to show him the like kindness. But other Scriptures teach us that these declarations are not to be taken literally. They teach us, that Christians are not saved simply and solely because they are kind to the ministers and members of the Church of Christ. Such kindness is not *all* the duty which they owe to God and man. And if they fail in any *one*, they incur eternal death. For, "Cursed is every one who *continueth* not in *all* things written in the book of the law to do them." And even, if from the commencement of their reformation they were to be *perfect* in *every* duty, they would still deserve death for their previous transgressions. Paul, therefore, tells us, "By

the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified" — that it is "not by works of righteousness" — but "according to his mercy, he saves us." Much less, then, can we be saved by a few acts of kindness to Christ or his people.

Nor is it true, on the other hand, that the wicked are punished, simply and solely for their *lack* of such kindness. Many of them never had an opportunity to do such kind acts. And as to those who have had it, their failure to improve it will be but a small portion of the sins for which they are doomed to death and woe. It is evident, then, that the text cannot be taken literally.

The conduct attributed in the parable to those on the right and left hand of the Judge, is to be regarded metaphorically, as a *criterion of character*, in other words, as evidence who *are* and who are *not* Christians. The same test was taught by Christ on other occasions. (Mark 9: 37.) "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but

him that sent me." And to the seventy whom he sent to preach, he said: (Luke 10: 16,) "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." In these passages, as well as in the text, we are taught the general maxim, that the real friends of Christ, to whom alone he promises salvation, will treat his ministers and his people kindly; while his enemies (and all who are not for him are against him,) will treat them *unkindly*. It is to be expected that those who love Christ will be kind to his friends, on his account: and that those who "hate him without a cause" will treat his friends with cold neglect, if not with abuse. He tells us, moreover, that while the world hates his people, (John 15: 19,) they "love one another." (John 13: 35.) And as "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and *the hands act*, it is to be expected that those who love Christians will treat them with kindness, and those who dislike them, will treat them with cold neglect, if not with positive injustice.

And how fully is this confirmed by observation. It will be seen, that generally speaking, Christians manifest much affection and kindness toward the ministers and members of the body of Christ: that they do it not only by intimacy, affection and kindly conduct, but by that "charity which covers a multitude of sins: which puts the best construction on conduct that seems to be wrong; which regrets, and which strives, as far as it is proper, to *conceal* what it cannot justify. While, on the other hand, it will generally be seen, that the impenitent feel much dislike to God's people — a gratification, rather than a regret at their misfortunes — a satisfaction, rather than a sorrow, at seeing them go astray — saying, "Aha, so would we have it" — and a disposition to injure, rather than to relieve them. Not unfrequently will you find them more sour and crusty towards saints than sinners — more ready to ridicule and revile, and to mortify and vex them. To these there are many exceptions; yet more *apparent* than real ones. Some sinners may treat Christians

kindly, yet not out of love to them, but by the constraining consciousness of the excellency of godliness — some out of regard to their own reputation, or for the sake of the good will of Christians, and some even for the sake of taking advantage of them. They may even love them as relatives, companions, or friends, and admire their talents, dispositions and manners; but in all this, it is not *the Christian*, as such, but the *relative*, the *friend*, or some *native excellence* that commands their affection or respect. And all I insist upon is, that sinners never show kindness out of respect to Christ or to his image in his followers. What love they have to such is checked and chilled, rather than increased by a sight of *piety* in its objects. Show me a man who gives even “a cup of cold water,” out of regard to Christ, and you show me one who will stand, in the Judgment, with the sheep at his right hand. Thus, kindness to saints is evidence of Christian character; and thence, of a title to eternal salvation; and unkindness is evidence to the contrary. It follows, then, that

Christ will sentence some to hell, because they remain his enemies ; and will receive the others to heaven, because they become his friends.

So there are many other portions of Scripture that *seem* to teach that the redeemed will be saved on the *same ground* that the lost will be punished ; that is, on the ground of their *desert*. Such are the passages which speak of all being judged according to their characters, words and works. But these are to be understood in harmony with other Scriptures. By sinners and transgressors, the unrighteous and ungodly, we are to understand those who *live and die* in sin ; and, that they suffer just what they deserve, for their own iniquities ; but by saints, by the righteous and the sanctified, we are to understand, not those who always have been obedient, (for such are not to be found,) but such as have *become* holy, by conversion and sanctification ; and that they are not saved by their own righteousness or good works, but by the righteousness of Christ through faith.

2. We are now prepared to inquire wherein

the Lord is just, in pronouncing such different dooms? This will be perfectly apparent, on considering distinctly the precise *grounds* on which he condemns the one class, and acquits the other. He condemns the wicked for two reasons: one is, they have violated his law; the other is, they have rejected his offer of salvation. His law requires a perfect, persevering obedience; and threatens death for a single transgression: for "The soul that sinneth [but once] shall die." Therefore by *one* transgression, our first parents incurred the curse of death and woe. And if it be asked, why a single sin should be threatened with such punishment, I answer: it was necessary, in order to give sufficient definiteness and force to the penalty. What authority would that parent have, who should give his children to understand that they might disobey him *for a while*, but that after some indefinite number of transgressions, he should punish them? And how could the State be governed, if its penal code were equally indefinite? Yet though the law of God threatens

every sin, it apportioned its penalties to the number and aggravations of man's offences. None will suffer more than they deserve.

But though the wicked deserve all the punishment which the law denounces on them, they *need not* suffer any of it. Ample provision is made for their deliverance. Salvation is offered them on easy terms; and thus they are left to their own option, whether to suffer it or not. The ultimate reason, then, why they endure the damnation of hell is, they refuse to be delivered from it; and this, in some respects, is more unwise and wicked than the transgressions by which they first became exposed to wrath. When we consider the love of God, in sending his Son for their redemption, and the sufferings of his Son to effect it, together with that scorn of this salvation, that love of sin, and that hatred of Christ, of his ministers and people, which prompt them to refuse this deliverance, we cannot doubt that "their damnation is just." They are cast into hell, not merely because they deserve it for their positive transgressions,

much less because they have been more wicked than those that are saved, but because they loved their sins so much, and hated Christ and his people so much, that they would not allow the Lord to save them in the only way which was consistent with the interests of his moral empire. Thus they have to "be *anathema maran-atha*," because they will "not love the Lord Jesus Christ." How justly they perish, then, when they do it so deliberately, and through the indulgence of such hateful and horrid affections.

But we have yet to inquire, *why*, while the wicked are cast into hell, the righteous are received into heaven? And here we would frankly confess, it is *not* because they *deserve* salvation: for, on the contrary, they richly deserve to "lie down in everlasting burnings." Nor is it because they have sinned *less* than the lost. Many, now in glory, have sinned more grievously than those who are now in the pit of woe. *There*, high in heaven, sits Menasseh, who once filled Jerusalem with innocent blood ;

and there, too, higher and nearer the throne of God, sits a Saul of Tarsus, who once breathed out threatening and slaughter against the followers of Christ. Many of the impenitent may suppose that Christians think they are saved on account of their own good works; but nothing can be farther from the truth. If any professors were to think so of themselves, it would be full proof that they were still "in the gall of bitterness, and bonds of iniquity." The real Christian feels himself more unworthy of God's favor, and more deserving of his wrath, than the sinner does. They regard themselves as covered, *not* with the fig-leaves of their own righteousness, but with the seamless garment of the righteousness of Christ. So far as their *own* conduct is concerned in it, they regard themselves as saved simply and only because they have accepted *that* salvation which is provided for, and offered unto *all*.

As the wicked are ultimately condemned because they do *not* accept of a provided salvation; so the righteous are acquitted because

they *do* accept it. Their good works are not mentioned in the context as things on the ground of which they *deserve* eternal life. No such thing. They are mentioned only as evidences of their having accepted the offered salvation. They show that the tree has been "made good," because "its fruit is good." They show that these persons have a love to Christ and his people which none but Christians feel: for "every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God." — 1 John 4: 7. And they show them to have a repentance and faith by which they have complied with the conditions of salvation, and that therefore, they are entitled to heaven on the ground, *not* of their own righteousness, but of *that* righteousness which Christ has wrought out for them by his "obedience unto death." So, on the other hand, the unkindness of those placed at the left hand of the Judge is not mentioned as the *whole* ground on which they are condemned; but as proof that they had not the love, penitence and faith by which they also might have obtained salvation.

I affirm again, that *all*, both the righteous and the wicked, are, as regards their original character, alike deserving of final wrath; and if they had continued the same, both would have inevitably perished. But a great change takes place with those that are to be saved. They give up their attachment to sin, and resolve to "walk in newness of life." That is, they repent; they give up their opposition to Christ and his plan of salvation; and in a "faith which worketh by love," they rely on his righteousness for deliverance from the wrath which they deserve. And yet this change of conduct and character affords them no claim to salvation on the ground of their *own merit*, as it makes no amends for the *past*. For past transgressions they *deserve* damnation as much as ever. From this they are delivered by the sufferings of Christ, and only because they have complied with the conditions on which such deliverance is offered. Nor is their after obedience of any avail to them, so far as their pardon is concerned, except as it furnishes proof that they have complied with the terms of salvation.

Against the doctrine of the final punishment of a portion of mankind it is sometimes objected, that *some who belong to the visible Church are just as wicked as many who are out of it.* But what of that? We are far from contending that all who are *in* the Church will be saved, or that all who are *out* of it are lost. Those who remain, in *all respects*, as bad as the impenitent and unbelieving, will perish, whether they are professors of religion or not. For Christ has said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" and, "He that believeth not, shall be damned." But those who do repent and believe *will* be saved, whether they are *in* the visible Church or *out* of it, "for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." They will be saved, let their conduct, *in other respects*, be what it may. Yet, if they do really repent and believe, they *will* be better in most respects (though they may not in *some* things) than the impenitent and unbelieving; for repentance is a sincere, abiding and full purpose to forsake every sin, and to discharge every duty. And faith is

that which "worketh by love," "purifieth the heart," and "overcometh the world." And therefore it is, that good works are the indispensable proofs that we have complied with the conditions of salvation. They, then, who say that Christians, as to their present moral character, are no better than others, are ignorant as to what they affirm, or they cannot believe what they say. If they do not see it now, they will see it in the final Judgment. *Then* they will "discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." Especially will "the Son of Man" discern it: for he will admit none to his kingdom but such as have given evidence by their treatment of him and his people, as well as by many other acts, that they have repented unto life, and have "believed to the saving of the soul." Nor will he banish any into everlasting punishment who have not shown, by a different course of conduct, that they have continually rejected the great and only salvation which is offered in the Gospel.

But it is asked, "How can it be right in God to send one man to hell, and to save another from it, while both are alike deserving of damnation?" And I answer, because the one has accepted the provided and offered salvation, while the other has *not*. And this is certainly a sufficient reason. Let me illustrate. We will suppose the objector to be a Son of Temperance, who has resolved to employ his property to aid the cause of total abstinence. (And certainly he has a right to do so, if he does not thereby infringe upon the rights of others. Nor can God have less liberty.) Two drunkards, who have mortgaged their farms for strong drink, apply to this man for money, to save their homes from being forthwith sold by the Sheriff. He offers to advance the needful sums on two conditions. The one is, that they sign the pledge of *total abstinence*; the other is, that they promise to be industrious and frugal hereafter; and that as far and as fast as they can, they will repay the sums which he shall advance. Are not these very fair and generous offers?

But it so happens, that the worst of these drunkards accepts the proposals, signs the pledge, gets his money, saves his farm, becomes sober and industrious, and thus makes himself and family happy. While the other rejects the proposal. Consequently, his farm is sold, and finally he is stripped of everything. In his ruin, he comes to this advocate of total abstinence, and reproaches him as the author of his ruin; blaming him the more for it, because he relieved the other drunkard. "Only think of it," he says, "you helped my neighbor, though he was a greater drunkard, and a greater pest to society than I have been."

What think you would be his reply? Why, if he would condescend to reason at all with such an unreasonable creature, he would say: "Man, you have no one to blame but *yourself*. I was ready to do the same for you that I did for the other drunkard, and on the same terms: terms which were not only necessary on my part, but reasonable and easy as regards yourself. You could have complied with them just

as easily as he did; and it would have been just as well for you as it has been for him. And as for myself, it would not have been consistent with my principles or my duty to help you, while you refused to sign the pledge, and to try to repay me. If I had helped you while you refused to reform, I should have encouraged and aided you in continuing your intemperance, and thus have injured the cause which I have espoused; and as my property is solemnly devoted to the cause of temperance, I ought to do all that I can with it to promote this cause. When, therefore, I advance a portion of it to promote one man's reformation, I ought to require him to make all reasonable efforts to return it, so that I may use it *again*, in promoting the reform of other inebriates."

Now this *pledge* illustrates the necessity of *repentance*, as a condition of salvation. For, if God were to pardon sinners without any purpose of theirs to forsake their sins, and to lead a new and holy life, he would encourage transgression. And the *promise* of striving to restore

the money, illustrates the need of requiring *saving faith*. For such faith is a virtual acknowledgment of our indebtedness to Christ for pardon and salvation, and of our consequent obligation to make all possible returns to him, by living in such a manner as to honor him, and as to promote his cause and his kingdom of grace among men.

How evident it is, then, that those who perish, perish not only most deservedly, but most needlessly; and not only needlessly, but through unspeakable folly: for their damnation is a deliberate self-destruction. Let me, therefore, entreat my impenitent hearers to avoid it. You cannot but know, that ample provisions are made for your salvation, and that it is as freely offered to *you*, as to any who accept and enjoy it. And why will not you enjoy it, as well as they? You have only to *repent* and *believe*: that is, to resolve fully and sincerely that you will strive to abandon *all* your sins of heart and life; and to rely wholly and willingly on the righteousness of Christ for pardon and eternal

life. And why will you not *now* decide to do so? You cannot but know that you are exposed every moment to awful and interminable woe, and that therefore it is at infinite peril that you neglect any longer this great salvation.

Resolve, then, to escape at once from the "everlasting punishment" of the pit of woe, and to secure the "pleasures forevermore that are at God's right hand."

But it may be that some of you are not fully convinced of your exposure to final wrath, and your need of salvation. I propose, therefore, to show, in my next discourse, *how such conviction is attained.*

SERMON III.

CONSIDERATION NEEDFUL TO CONVICTION AND CONVERSION.

"I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. — Ps. 119: 59.

God's word, or "testimonies," are the rule of man's conduct. When, therefore, the Psalmist thought on his "ways" or conduct, he found himself wandering from the divine commandments, and was thus induced to return to them. Reflection on his conduct convinced him of sin, thus leading him to reform. And what took place with him, needs to take place with all transgressors. I propose, therefore, to show, in connection with the words of the text,

The importance of consideration to conviction of sin, and to conversion from it.

Our first position is: The necessity of consideration to conviction. By *consideration*, I mean a candid and close examination of our moral conduct. And by *conviction*, I mean not merely a distressing fear of final wrath, — although that is the common signification attached to the expression — but I mean the *convincement* of the understanding, that we have sinned against God, and are therefore in need of salvation by his grace. Distressing fear of divine wrath is not the *essence* of this conviction, but its frequent attendant; and this conviction needs to be full and clear, rather than agitating. All men have more or less consciousness of guilt, but not enough to lead them to repentance. They need, then, to think upon their ways more attentively, and faithfully to compare their conduct with the precepts and penalties of the Word of God. For, as the apostle says, “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” And although these things are often brought to their minds by reading the Bible, and by hearing the Gospel, this is not enough to produce an effectual

conviction. They need to ponder much and candidly on what they read, carefully comparing it with their own hearts and lives. And they need to do this with a desire, an earnest intention to gain a thorough knowledge of their case; else they will be liable to flatter and deceive themselves, and thereby fail to ascertain their real condition.

Such is consideration: and if it be faithful, conviction will be the result. For the evidence of their guilt and ruin is so plain, that all who examine it faithfully must be convinced. Why, then, do so many remain unconvinced? It is only because they will not *consider*. They *will* not, simply because, if they do consider, they are sure to be self-condemned. Said Christ, "Every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd." And hence the necessity of their being urged to this duty, not only by the Word of God, but by the special visitation of his providence and Spirit.

Our next position is, that *conviction* leads to

conversion. It is not, however, insisted that this is its invariable result. Lamentably often, its result is far otherwise. Many who have had the deepest distress in conviction have, nevertheless, stifled it, and relapsed into greater hardness of heart, and greater excess of wickedness than before : thus fulfilling the words of Christ, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest : and finding none, he saith, I will return to my house whence I came out. — Then goeth he and taketh to himself seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there. And *the last state of that man is worse than the first.*" But though there may be consideration and conviction, without conversion, there can be no conversion without conviction : for none will repent till they see their sins, nor will any escape till they see their danger. And though conviction does not always secure conversion, it has a fitness to do so, and a strong tendency to do so. Indeed it would *always* result in repentance, if it were not for

the deep depravity of the heart. The understanding is designed to be the leading faculty of the soul. Its office is to search out, by the aid of revelation, the way in which we should go; and the moral feelings should always follow its guidance. But so corrupt are they, that they often refuse to do so, thus resisting the convictions of the understanding. And the weaker these convictions, the more easily are they overcome. If they were sufficiently strong, they would be victorious, thus securing conversion to God. Conviction leads to conversion by persuasion. The more fully, then, we are convinced of our guilt and of our exposure to wrath, the more difficult it will be for us to refuse to escape from them. The deeper, then, and the more distressing our conviction, the more it avails toward securing conversion.

But our main position is, that this consideration, which leads to conviction and conversion, is an important duty. That it is the *duty* of every one thus to "think upon his ways," is evident to all. Man should not act from blind

impulse, or according to his own selfish inclinations, but according to the law of God. In other words, he ought to consider, whether the way in which he is walking is the way of God's testimonies: — that if it is not, he may turn to them without delay. If a man is injuring us, we feel that he ought not to be regardless of it; but should consider, and at once desist. Just so, then, should we act in regard to our offences against God and man.

And the *importance* of this duty is equally evident. It is one which we owe, not only to our Maker and our fellow man, but to ourselves. It is important, because so long as we neglect it, we continue our wrong doing. If a man should injure us in but a single act, we should regard him as an unfeeling wretch, if he cared nothing about it; still worse if he kept on repeating, with heartless indifference, the very same act. And just so do all act toward God, who do not "think upon their ways." In proportion, then, to the baseness of neglecting the duty, is the importance of discharging it.

But we will now restrict our attention to its importance, as regards *our own welfare*. It is important to ourselves, because it is necessary to our conviction and conversion, and thus to our eternal salvation. We are all, by nature, the children of wrath. Having all sinned, we are condemned already to eternal woe; and thus the wrath of God abideth on us. Nor can we escape this wrath, unless we forsake our sins, and walk in the way of God's testimonies. For, "except we repent, we must all perish." "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." And, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Conversion, then, is necessary to salvation. And equally necessary to it are consideration and conviction; since without them, there is no conversion. Now the importance of salvation is to be measured by the worth of the soul; and "what shall it profit a man," said Christ, "if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" and, "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" As, then, the soul is of infinite value,

its salvation is of infinite importance. Of equal importance, then, is that consideration which is absolutely necessary to the soul's eternal welfare. It is of infinite importance that we "think upon our ways;" for unless we do so, we shall not turn our feet to God's testimonies, and thus shall suffer the loss of the soul in hell. Well, then, did Moses exclaim, concerning the thoughtless and impenitent, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end." Wise, indeed, would it be in them to do so — infinitely *unwise* not to do so.

There is no business on earth that man has to attend to, which is more needful or momentous than the salvation of the soul. It should have his first and most earnest attention. And yet he is disposed to give it his last and least attention: or rather, to give it no attention at all. He is unwilling to consider even his *need* of this salvation, and thus is utterly defeating it. Let us look, then, for a while, at this strange aversion to consider his ways — to see what are

his reasons for it, and how insufficient they are. One man pleads *the want of time*, insisting that he is so completely occupied with the cares and labors of every-day life, that he has no leisure for attending to the concerns of the soul. But the infinite importance of consideration is enough to show the insufficiency of such an excuse. Why is his life prolonged, and why is his time given him, but that he may think on his ways and turn his feet to God's testimonies? He should "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," because it is of the first importance. He should do it, though it should hinder his attention to everything else, even the preservation of life; for all other things are of no value at all, compared with the worth of the soul. How can he spend his time more profitably than in escaping

"A death whose pangs outlast the fleeting breath?"

But he can attend to this duty without interfering at all with his other interests and obligations. While "not slothful in business," he can

be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." While most busily engaged in his usual employment, his thoughts often wander off on other subjects. And they might as well be dwelling on his own character and condition. Besides, he is often at leisure; and these idle moments would furnish time enough so to consider his ways as to lay hold on eternal life; for it need not take him long to find that he is a sinner, needing salvation, nor long to turn to God and live. Or, if he has not sufficient leisure by day, he can redeem it from needless sleep. And what if he should spend a sleepless night in making his calling and salvation sure? Could he spend it more profitably than in securing the infinite glories of an eternal day? And alas, how much time, by day and night, is he spending in forbidden and ruinous employments. How much better to spend them in that consideration which would lead to conversion and a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Others refuse to think on their ways, because they suppose the religion to which it leads their

steps would interfere with the pleasures, riches, or honors to which they aspire. And what if it should? What are the pleasures of earth, compared with "fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore, at God's right hand?" What is the wealth of the entire world, compared with the durable riches of righteousness? And what the honors of earth, compared with the "far more exceeding weight of glory?" Better lose the whole world, than lose their own soul. But religion does not debar us from one temporal blessing that is worth possessing; nor does it hinder us in acquiring it. It rather aids us in the attainment of all that are truly desirable. Nay, it *promises* them to all those who "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." And thus it gives promise, both of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

But many are kept from considering their ways, for fear of disgrace. They fear that their fellow sinners will despise and revile them. And what if they do? Every wise and honorable act has had to encounter the scorn and

sneers of the weak and the wicked. Yet it is evident that there is nothing base or disgraceful in looking at our conduct in order to amendment, or in looking at our exposure to evil in order to escape it. None think of despising a man for acting thus in regard to his temporal affairs. And how can it be disgraceful to do the same in regard to our eternal welfare? Why more disgraceful to avoid the pit of hell, than the penitentiary? What can there be ignoble in escaping from a "resurrection to shame and everlasting contempt?" and of securing "a crown of life that fadeth not away?" Nothing can be mean that is momentous.

"But ah!" it will be said; "there is something disgraceful, when we think on our way, in feeling and tacitly confessing ourselves sinners, deserving final wrath." No: the shame is not in *feeling and confessing* it, but in actually *being* such. It is rather ingenuous and noble than otherwise, to *confess* and *forsake* sin; while it adds both to the guilt and the disgrace of sin, to de-

ny and continue it. But though it were as disgraceful as could be imagined, to consider and to forsake our sins, it should be unflinchingly done, because of its infinite importance. How much better to be the derision and scorn of all the ungodly, that we may become the joy of men and angels on earth, and be adorned with the white robes and bright crowns of the saints in light, than to keep on in the way to death.

Others, again, are kept from considering their ways, by the notion that the religion to which such consideration leads them, not only forbids their pleasures, but imposes painful duties; and thus makes them unhappy. And what if all this were true? The duty of consideration and conversion is so momentous, that no privation of enjoyment, and no amount of sufferings, should induce them to delay this one thing needful; for present delay may prove eternal death, and thus bring upon them sufferings infinitely greater than what they fear: while, if they turned to God's testimonies, they would secure those "pleasures forevermore,"

that would infinitely overbalance all the unhappiness which they fear from religion.

But it is *not* true, that religion would make them unhappy in life. It would, on the other hand, greatly add to their enjoyment on earth. On this point I will be brief, for I hope to say more of it in a future discourse. Suffice it to say, for the present, that the Bible represents the saint as more happy than the sinner — that Christians uniformly declare themselves to be more happy in serving God than they were, while rebelling against him, and that, as a general thing, the righteous *appear* no less happy than the ungodly. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that God would allow those who love and obey him, to be more unhappy than those who hate and rebel against him. Again, the affections and services of God's people must, from their nature, contribute to their enjoyment, while the affections of the wicked must make them unhappy: and if religion makes men miserable, and sin makes them happy, then heaven must be a place of infinite woe, and hell

a place of infinite bliss. But I hope to make these points more plain hereafter.

Some are convinced, it may be, that if they were once truly converted, they would be no less happy for being Christians; yet they regard the *way* to religion as a very painful one. They dread the distresses attendant on conviction and conversion, and wish they were already passed; but shrink from them, and thus delay. Probably, many of such intend to encounter them before death; yet still delay. But if they have ever to encounter them, the sooner the better, for there is much pain in *dreading* them; and this pain ceases when conversion is passed. Unless they become perfectly thoughtless and hardened, (a most dangerous state,) during all their days of impenitency, they will have some degree of this painful conviction of sin and danger. Whereas, if they would immediately "think on their way," and turn to God, the pain would be succeeded by peace and joy.

It is indeed true, that a full conviction of sin is often excessively distressing. Conscience

is one of the most powerful faculties of moral beings ; and we can scarcely conceive of anguish more keen than that inflicted by the consciousness of guilt. "A wounded spirit, who can bear?" We have often seen the sinner so overwhelmed with a sight of his sins, that sleep, and appetite, and health have fled ; and it seemed that, if relief had not soon come, death or distraction would have soon ensued. Often, too, are persons so tortured with remorse for some foul crimes of which they are not suspected, that they are forced to the confession of them.

But it is the dread of this pain that keeps many from thinking on their ways, while it should powerfully urge them to consider them effectually. It is this that makes many try to disbelieve or forget God's word, because it condemns them. But how unwise and vain. Doubting will not annul God's denunciations ; and present forgetfulness will not prevent the evil effects of sin. It will only aggravate them. Sinners should rather reason thus : "If the slight glimpses which we are obliged occasion-

ally to take of a few of our sins are now so painful, how much more so to look upon *all* of them *eternally* in hell?" And this should urge them the sooner and the more thoroughly to think on their ways, that they may turn to God's testimonies, and thus escape from all the pangs of present remorse, and all the pains of final perdition.

But the business of consideration, conviction and conversion need not be so painful as it often proves. Many "pass from death unto life" with comparatively little distress. And so might others, if they would look to their ways in the right manner, and for the right purpose. The distress so often felt is usually occasioned by the reluctance and *resistance* of the sinner. His consideration and conviction are forced upon him, and the pain which he endures is occasioned by his resistance, and prolonged by his refusal to turn to God. If he would begin the work of self-examination with the sincere and full purpose to see his danger and escape from it, the work would be one of comparative-

ly little distress, and of short duration. And the first burst of joy, after its completion, would amply compensate for all the suffering endured. How unwise, then, to postpone this work, or to aggravate and prolong it, when begun. If a painful surgical operation needs to be performed, what folly to lie long under the increasing anguish of the wound, refusing to submit to this operation which alone can bring relief! And when the needful work is begun, how unwise to prolong it by resistance, and thus to prolong and increase the pain that needs to be relieved; especially how unwise to do so, when delay may be death!

But important as consideration is, sinners seldom attend to it until it is powerfully pressed upon them by some special providence of God. Sometimes by a narrow escape from a fatal accident, or by the danger of death in sickness or otherwise; sometimes by the loss of a dear friend or relative; and sometimes by other bereavements, they are led to consider the uncertainty and emptiness of all earthly things; and

to see their need of securing the society and treasures of heaven. These afflictions, God sends "for their profit, that they may be partakers of his holiness;" and many have occasion to bless him forever for them, because they have "worked out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Others are arrested by the special influences of the Spirit of God. All at once, by some unaccountable means, they find their minds unusually solemn and tender; and their thoughts turned within, on their own conduct and prospects for the world to come. They may try to rid themselves of the unwelcome subject—saying: "Out! out! damning thought!" but it will not away. They soon discover their own sin and ruin, and the importance of fleeing from the wrath to come. And sometimes (would to God it happened more frequently,) the Spirit impresses many minds in the same place and time, compelling them to think on their way, and on their need of turning unto God. These occasions are called revivals of

religion, or "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." These seasons, in which "God appears in his glory to build up Zion," have been frequently brought into disrepute by the mismanagement of some, and extravagance of others. Yet are they of infinite importance, since, notwithstanding these abuses, they issue in the salvation of many precious souls. Often has a dead orthodoxy despised such "revivals of the work of God;" insinuating that they are the result of terror in the pulpit and weakness in the pew. But that they are not effected merely by the preaching of terror, is evident from the fact, that this same style of preaching at other times, and in other places, will not produce the like results. And what though the deep and solemn attention at such seasons were awakened by the trumpet of alarm, if it do but lead the sinner to lay hold on eternal life?

But even when sinners are thus thoroughly awakened by these divine visitations, and powerfully urged to think on their ways, they are feeling at the same time a strange aversion to

them, and are continually resisting the pressure which urges them forward. Especially do they struggle against that persuasion of the truth, and that influence of the Spirit which urges them to repent, and to believe and be saved. This is most manifest in a powerful revival. Many of those who have the fullest sight of their sins and the deepest distress on account of their danger, will fight most furiously against the truth and mercy of God, and yield only when they are overcome, or rather are slain in the conflict. Nor are they always thus overcome. And others, who are not so deeply impressed, both hate and fear the work of salvation that is going on among them. Some flee the place, to escape it; others, who stay in the midst of it, ridicule and revile, or otherwise oppose it; while others silently hate it, and resolve that it shall not press them into the kingdom of heaven.

There is, moreover, a means of opposition which needs a separate notice. It is the allegation that these cases of conviction and con-

version are *the result of sympathy*. It is insinuated that sympathy is a human weakness, which creates groundless fears in the subjects of these revivals — they becoming alarmed by seeing the alarm of others. Many, therefore, disdain to give way to their fears, lest they be taunted for their weakness. But this is as unphilosophical as it is wicked. This disposition to feel as others feel is a susceptibility which God has given us for benevolent and noble purposes. It lies at the foundation of our social natures, and is needful for our individual welfare. It should, therefore, be welcome, when it contributes to our good, and avoided only when it would be injurious. And alas, that men sympathize so much in a time of stupidity, with the carelessness and the daring impiety of the many whom they see around them. Perhaps no gospel sinner could remain unalarmed at what he already knows of his own sin and danger, if he were not kept in countenance by the stupidity of the multitude about him. Whereas, if he saw them concerned about their guilt and dan-

ger, he would think at once, "I also am a sinner, and must be in the same condemnation." The truth is, the impenitent sympathize too much with the stupid, and too little with the alarmed. Thus, with "hand joined with hand," they keep on "with the multitude to do evil."

Yet the great question respecting the alarm of the sinner is not what was the *occasion* of it, but whether it is well founded? He should not be alarmed simply because *others* are alarmed. He should be "fully persuaded in his *own* mind" respecting his own condition. And this conviction he must obtain by comparing his life with the precepts and penalties of the Word of God. And, if he finds there is sufficient ground for alarm, it is well that *sympathy*, or something else, has led him to think upon his way. Such an influence of sympathy is perfectly natural, and perfectly rational. When one man sees others alarmed respecting some temporal danger, it would be strange if he should not be excited by it to consider whether he were not in the like danger. And is not

this as proper in respect to the eternal welfare of the soul, as to the brief affairs of this life?

When God is calling sinners to repentance, either by his special providences or by the special influences of his Spirit, it is with them emphatically "an accepted time," and "a day of salvation." They should consider, then, that they now have their *best*, and probably their *last* opportunity to seek and find salvation. It is a time when God has come especially nigh to them. They should, therefore, the more earnestly "seek the Lord, while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near." And to do this, they need to think upon their ways, in order to see their need of his mercy. They should be careful also how, by neglect or opposition, they grieve his Spirit, and provoke him to leave them forever. They should welcome and foster every argument, and every influence that urges them to turn to God and live. They should "*strive* to enter in at the straight gate," and fully purpose to persevere in their efforts, till they find salvation.

Nor is it these alone that should make such earnest efforts to enter into life. It is the duty and interest of all the impenitent to think upon their ways, and turn their feet to God's holy testimonies. They should not wait for the afflictive dispensations of his providence, or the special influences of his Spirit, to rouse them to the work. Many, no doubt, are thus waiting. They seem to be thinking that nothing can be done by them, till they have such special visitations. But the gate of life is always open to them, and Christ is always waiting to receive them. Many, no doubt, are hoping, that when the day of distress, or of final sickness comes, they shall have the better time to repent, and prepare for death. But death will probably come to them without warning, as he does to the most of others. Nor is the time of sickness and pain the "more convenient season" to make their peace with God; far otherwise. And some, it may be, are looking forward to a revival as the time when they will secure eternal life; while the probability is, that before

another revival comes, they will have gone to the bar of God.

My fellow sinners, so momentous is the work which you need to do, and so uncertain the time in which it must be done, that it ought to be done without delay. *Now* you have an opportunity to think on your way, so as to turn to the Lord, and thus to escape eternal woe; and you know not that you will ever have another. Instead of waiting for some visitations of God to drive you to this work, you ought to begin it at once, with the utmost deliberation. Not only your duty and interest, but your dignity as immortal beings require it of you. As it is an infinitely important work, it is a noble one. Do not basely shrink from it, then, because the weak and wicked around you think it disgraceful. Maintain a manly independence of opinion. Nothing that you can do would be more magnanimous than calmly and firmly to resolve, that you will ascertain your spiritual condition, and what you have to do, in order to secure a blessed and glorious immortality.

You often inquire within yourselves, whether your course, as to your temporal affairs, is the safest and best; and whether any change is needful to secure your temporal prosperity. Why not act thus in regard to your spiritual and eternal welfare? Why not attend to it in the same deliberate and *business-like* manner? — especially as you can thus do the important work with far less time, and pain, and trouble. May I not hope that you will begin the task at once? Will you not forthwith and faithfully consider your lives in the light of God's Word, till you see your need of salvation? and seeing your need of it, will you not resolve to seek at once the straight gate of life? Resolving and acting thus, you will be the better prepared to follow me in the next discourse.

SERMON IV.

CRITICAL INQUIRIES AND CORRECT DIRECTIONS

AS TO THE WAY OF SALVATION.

THEIR IMPORTANCE.

“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”—Acts 16: 30.

This question was put by the jailor of Philip-
pi to Paul and Silas, who were then his prison-
ers. On the previous day, the magistrates had
laid “many stripes upon them, and cast them
into prison, charging the jailor to keep them
safely: who, having received *such* a charge,
thrust them into the *inner* prison, and made

their feet fast in the stocks." But though they had been so cruelly treated, and though their present situation was so gloomy and distressing, Paul and Silas were the happiest men in that pleasure-loving city. So joyful were they, that "they prayed and sang praises to God" at midnight. Those prayers were heard of God, and answered by an earthquake that shook the foundations of the prison, burst open its doors, and loosened the bands of all the prisoners. As the jailor awoke and saw the prison open, he supposed the prisoners had fled; and expecting, probably, that he should be put to an ignominious death, for letting them escape, he drew his sword to take his own life. At this critical moment, "Paul cried with a loud voice, 'Do thyself no harm, for we are all here.' Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be *saved*?'"

Saved? — from what? It could not have been *temporal* death from which he sought to

be delivered, for Paul and Silas must have understood his inquiry, and have answered it accordingly. And they answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But *faith in Christ* was suited, in this heathen government, to *hasten* rather than *prevent* his criminal execution. Nor had he any reason to expect such a death, for no prisoner had fled. He had probably heard something of the Gospel, as it had been preached by Paul and Silas, during the many days that they had been in Philippi, and was now convinced, by the events of the night, and by the conduct of these its preachers, that Christianity was true; consequently, that according to it, he was exposed to final wrath. Hence his haste and consternation, his trembling and falling down before them; and hence his earnest inquiry, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

I shall take occasion from these words, to urge,

The importance of precise inquiries — of precise answers — and of the precise observance

of such answers to the momentous question of man's salvation. It is the more necessary to insist on this topic, because a great share of the impenitent are amazingly loose, indefinite and vague, in their attention to it. On no other subject are they so wanting in precision and thoroughness. It is only on some rare occasions — that is, when they are “under conviction,” as the phrase is — that they can be induced to think on this subject to any purpose. And then, it is because their attention has been arrested and aroused by the providence or Spirit of God, to see in some measure their sin and their danger. Of such, it is often said, to their discredit, that they are *excited*. But they need to be *in some way* excited, or else they would never attend effectually to the things that belong to their peace. And if they are excited to inquire as earnestly as the jailor of Philippi did, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” it is of little consequence what it is that excites them.

Many are even neglectful of the all-important

question, whether they are actually exposed to eternal death. If a man were told by a competent and reliable physician, that he had a disease upon him, which, if not soon arrested, would be fatal, how unwise he would be, to use no means for its removal! "Sir," says the man of medical science, "that red spot on your face is the commencement of a *cancer*, which, if not soon arrested, its arrest will be impossible." How unwise in such a man to say, "I feel no pain there; I guess there is no danger;" and so neglect himself, till remedy is unavailing. But how much more unwise is he who is told that the plague-spot of sin is upon him, and that unless the remedy be soon applied, death, *eternal* death, will be the consequence; but who neglects even to ascertain more fully the truth of his danger; or who says, if he thinks at all on the subject, "I question whether I have any disease, or whether, if I have, it may not somehow pass away of itself." And this is the more unwise, as the great Physician has put into his hand an unerring treatise, show-

ing him of a certainty he has the disease, and is nigh unto death with it. How unwise to think he is not wicked enough to be lost, when the Bible tells him, "the soul that sinneth [if but once] it shall die" — that "cursed is every one that *continueth* not in *all* things written in the book of the law to do them;" and that, "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all:" in short, that by his first sin he incurs eternal death; and that all his subsequent sins are provoking God the more to "cut him down as a cumberer of the ground."

But many confess, in general terms, that they are sinners, exposed to eternal death; and that they must do *something* to escape it. But they remain in strange uncertainty and indifference, as to what that something is. Many seem to think there are several remedies, and one is about as good as another; while unerring Wisdom teaches there is but *one*. That was given in answer to the question in our text. It is *faith*. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and

thou shalt be saved." It is true, that when the like question was asked at Pentecost, the answer was, "repent." But I regard this as virtually requiring *faith*; for that state of heart which gives exercise to repentance, will of a certainty give exercise to *faith* also. Where the one is found, the other will be found. To require one, is virtually to require *both*. They always go together, and both are essential to salvation. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." And, "He that believeth not, shall be damned."

But the wonder is, that while there is given such definite information on this subject, they whose eternal interest is at stake will not properly examine it. But stranger still, that, if they do examine it, they do not settle down upon the information, when found, but look around for something else. The *only* way is not agreeable, and they seek some more welcome way of escape from the wrath to come. Many who profess to believe the Bible, are trying to persuade themselves that a scanty supply

of outward morality would counterbalance all their sins against God and man, while often told in the Word of God, that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified;" and that "without faith, it is impossible to please God." How many rely upon a vague, indefinite, if not a mere fancied resignation and trust in God for forgiveness, while taught in the Bible, that saving faith is a *specific* reliance upon *Christ as a Mediator*. How many rely on a little external reformation, or a little formality, such as infant or adult baptism, though the Bible assures them that these things would make them but "whited sepulchres, beautiful," it may be, "without, but within full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness." Nay, how many seem to think that some *general* attention to religion, such as reading the Bible, or attendance on public worship, is all they need to do, for securing salvation; sneering at all preciseness on the subject, as needless, pharisaical and foolish. Such a course is not only impious, as it is a disregard of the frequent and fearful warnings of

God against impenitence and unbelief; but is awfully dangerous, as it perils the soul. It provokes the Almighty to demonstrate the truth of these warnings by the more speedy execution of his denunciations.

Such want of accuracy and definiteness would be ruinous in temporal affairs. Suppose a man were told by competent and reliable advisers, "Sir, by the course you have taken, you are liable to have all your property stripped away from you; and yet, if you will follow out precisely the course which we have now delineated, all will yet be well." And suppose, on hearing this, he says: "The course you recommend will be attended with some considerable trouble, and I don't think my property is in such danger as you say. I think I will let the thing take its own course." And suppose they prove from the statute-book that the danger is real, and urge him to save, by one simple measure, himself and family from beggary and starvation. But still, by utter neglect, or by loose and careless attention to their advice, he suffers the loss

of all. What folly would he thus manifest. But how much greater his folly, who suffers, by a similar course, the loss of his soul.

Again, suppose a man is to be tried for his life, before an earthly tribunal, and his lawyers tell him he must present to the court a certain specified testimony, or no jury on earth can clear him. But suppose he replies, "I *can* secure that testimony. But I dislike to call on the only man that can furnish it; for the truth is, I hate him. And I don't think it necessary to be so particular." They point to the legal authorities, and warn him again, that this particular testimony is all that can save him. But he neglects to procure it, and thereby suffers death. What think you of his conduct? Why, it is perfect wisdom, compared with the preparations that many are making to meet their God in judgment.

One illustration more. A man is sinking in a far-gone disease. His physician tells him, "Your case is most dangerous; yet there is one, and *only* one remedy that can reach it. If you

will apply it exactly according to my directions, you will certainly recover; if not, you will as certainly die. But because the remedy is an unpleasant one, he delays, and asks for more agreeable ones, till his mouth is sealed in death. But how much greater the folly of those who are seeking salvation by other means than repentance and faith.

Many diseases of the *body* admit of various remedies; but even in such cases, it is very unwise to spend much time in seeking for those that are most pleasant; especially when delay endangers life. How much more, then, if the disease admits of but one remedy? And such is the fact in the soul-destroying malady of sin. The whole Bible testifies that there is no escape from eternal death, but by repentance and faith; that these, *only*, and these *precisely*, will avail; that any effort to escape in any other way will only provoke the more, divine wrath; because it is an impious effort to constrain the Almighty to contradict himself, by accepting a substitute for these, when he has so often and solemnly declared he will accept of *none*.

How strange, then, that where it is immensely most important, that our inquiries should be exact, precise, and *definite*, there men should be most loose, general and vague; and there they should remain most uncertain and unsettled in mind. Certainly, if there is any question in the world on which we need definite and exact information, it is on the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" Surely, then, we should pursue the inquiry with unceasing eagerness, until satisfied that we have the precise and full information that we need.

And if, on this momentous subject, our *inquiries* should be exact and definite, it is equally important that the *answers* to them should *also* be exact and definite; otherwise such inquiries would be utterly in vain. But how many errorists in high places teach anything else than repentance and faith, as conditions of salvation? Nay, many *evangelical* ministers are not sufficiently distinct, and clear, and emphatic on this point. They insist so much on external reformation, on reading the Bible and attending

church, on confession and prayer, on "coming to the altar," and the like, as to leave the impression, I fear, that these means of grace are the *conditions* of salvation. I blame them not for urging them as *duties*; for duties they are, and ought to be done, salvation or no salvation. But what I blame is, that they do not tell sinners more distinctly, that *not* these means of grace, but *faith* and *repentance* are the conditions of salvation: or that, if they do name these as the only conditions, they do not accurately define them, nor distinguish them from their concomitants. Faith and repentance should stand out in bold relief, *distinct* and *alone*, as the *only* terms on which God will pardon sin and save the soul. If there is any point in divinity on which ministers should try to be peculiarly *clear*, *distinct* and *emphatic*, it is this. But they often leave it in a perfect fog. They often mystify it by the way in which they speak of it in connection with divine agency, leaving the impression that repentance and faith are such high, mysterious things, that man cannot

reach them; if not the impression, that God must, as it were, *believe and repent for us*. Ministers should try to strip repentance and faith of every adventitious envelopment, and to present them in their naked simplicity to the sinner's mind, with their elements and features accurately described. For it is to be feared that many fail of salvation because they know not exactly in what these conditions consist.

It seems to me, the sinner can be easily made to understand sufficiently the nature of repentance and faith. He understands what it is to *resolve* that he will give up all wrong conduct and feeling toward his fellow *man*. And is it not as easy to understand what it is to *resolve*, that he will give up all wrong conduct and feeling toward *God*? Yet this *resolution* is, in my opinion, the very essence of "repentance unto life." This, I know, is doubted by many. They say men often resolve in vain; "resolving, re-resolving, yet dying the same." But *such* resolutions are very different from the one I am now speaking of. They are always

unthorough and half-hearted, and often imaginary. But the one I speak of is a *sincere, full* purpose of the sinner, to cease for life and forever from all wrong action and exercise, as far as God shall enable him. He may not *expect*, but he does *intend*, "as far as in him lies," to "turn from the power of Satan unto God." Such a purpose as this will abide through life. But *such* a resolution God will accept without waiting to have it fulfilled. If in it he sees the sincere and "the willing mind," he will "accept it," granting the sinner pardon, and along with it a new heart, and all needful grace to fulfill his resolution, so far as it is necessary to his salvation. But I hope to consider this point more fully hereafter.

Again, the sinner understands what it is to believe the statements of his fellow man. Why, then, can he not understand what it is to "believe the record which God has given of his Son?" He knows, too, what it is to rely upon the promised favor of man. And why not understand, then, that "saving faith," which is

simply a *reliance* upon the provided and promised righteousness of Jesus Christ for salvation? Where is the difficulty of understanding what it is to depend wholly and alone on Christ for pardon and eternal life, through his atoning blood? Most inexcusable and culpable are religious teachers, then, if they do not describe the conditions of salvation so simply, and accurately, and clearly, that the inquirer cannot help understanding them: for it is infinitely important that such distinct answers should be given them. But more may be expected on this point, also, in another discourse.

Yet vain the most particular inquiries as to the way of life, and vain the most plain and accurate answers to them, unless they are carefully followed by those who endeavor to "enter into life." What folly in a man to think himself safe in regard to the cholera because he carries in his pocket a sovereign remedy, with directions how to use it. But how much greater the folly of feeling safe from "the wrath to come," because he has a speculative knowledge of the way of

escape from it. Yet some are asking after the way of life with no distinct purpose of entering it *now*, if *ever*. And others are priding themselves on their speculative knowledge of the plan of saving grace, while they have no thought of complying with the conditions of salvation. Whereas, the more they know of it, the greater their sin, and the greater the wrath that awaits them. Yes, and in some respects, the greater the probability that they will finally suffer it. For, by sinning against the greater light, they do the more to exhaust the patience of God, and to harden their own hearts.

To enter the straight gate, we must not only have an accurate knowledge of the way, but we must be awake to it at the time of entering. I may have adequate knowledge of the road to a certain place: yet, if I am heedless on my way there, I may plunge into this ditch, run off that bridge, and take this, that, or the other devious track, and thus utterly fail of reaching my place of destination. So, the sinner may have ever so precise an understanding of the

elements of repentance and faith, yet, if he is inattentive to them, he cannot put them into the requisite exercise. Until he is quite within the gate of life, he is exposed to many sinful biases that are apt to divert the attention and draw him into paths that *seem* to run parallel with the way of life, while they are but the outmost tracks in the "broad way which leadeth to destruction."

If the sinner would be saved, he must fix his mind on *repentance* and *faith*, to the exclusion of everything else. He must keep saying to himself, "I must have *repentance or perdition*: I must *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, or be lost forever.*" And he must keep striving to repent and believe, till he succeeds and is saved. For, if he turns away his eye from the straight gate of life, or relaxes his efforts to enter it, there is a fearful probability that the Spirit, resisted and grieved, will leave him to relapse into hopeless stupidity. Or, if he should be roused again, and brought back to the same stand, the struggle must be renewed, and under

greater disadvantages than before. How much better, then, not to cease from his struggles till he has "entered into life."

My fellow sinners, you know this subject is one in which all the holy on earth and in heaven are feeling the deepest interest. And you know it is one of more importance to *you* than to any other order or class of beings in the universe. If the angels of God are shouting for joy over each sinner that repents, how deep should be your concern in the subject of your *own* salvation. And in proportion to its importance to you should be the earnestness and exactness of your attention and efforts. But are you not conscious of a strange and a strong unwillingness to consider it properly?

If you had only a *small* amount of property left by will to you, it would not be so strange if you took but little pains to get the possession of it. But, if you became the heir of an earldom or a dukedom, worth many millions, it would surely be strange indeed, if you did not make most careful, and critical, and most stren-

uous and persevering efforts to secure possession. How eagerly you would inquire the exact measures to be taken; and how careful you would be to take them precisely and thoroughly. O how unspeakably amazing, then, that when you are offered a kingdom and a crown of more importance to you than to "gain the whole world," you are unwilling even to learn the exact mode in which the possession of it is to be taken: and that when you learn that you have only to *repent* and *believe*, in order to secure this infinite gain, you are utterly unwilling to do so.

You cannot but be conscious, my fellow sinners, that you have this inveterate and desperate aversion to the way of salvation; and that it is causing you to delay the most important of all concerns. And probably you try to excuse yourselves, and quiet your consciences, by pleading this very aversion. But this aversion, let me tell you, is the most wicked, and the most dangerous feature of your moral character. What a horrid thing, to love sin so much, that

you are not willing to forsake it; and to hate God and his service so much that you are not willing to obey him, even to escape eternal woe, and to gain eternal blessedness! For this aversion alone, you ought to loathe and abhor yourselves; and sorrow in the deepest dust before God.

And how dangerous is this aversion, as it is constantly inducing you to neglect the great salvation. If you were walking on a steep, high precipice, on the bank of a deep, rapid river, and a violent wind were driving you toward it, you would keep as far as possible from the dizzy, dangerous edge, lest some sudden gust should dash you off that precipice, to perish in the deep below. But more dreadful *far*, is the height which you are now treading on the brink of death and hell. Fiercer and more fearful the corruption within, that is pressing you toward it. Yet you are yielding to and cherishing that corruption; although it has already driven you to the veriest verge of destruction; and its next impulse may plunge you

into the billows of "deep damnation." It is not God, but *yourselves* that you have most to fear. He is willing and waiting to save you, in the only consistent way—in a way, also, that is best for *you*, as well as him. But *you* are unwilling to *let* him save you. O that you would at length consent to be saved. O that you would now resolve, with all your heart, to forsake your sins, and trust in the blood of Christ for salvation. Till you have done *this*, you have done *nothing* to purpose. And when you *have* done it, you have done *all* that is needed. O do it NOW, I beseech you, lest you do it NEVER.

Fuller views of faith and repentance will be found in the next five discourses.

S E R M O N V .

THE ELEMENTS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SAVING FAITH.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."—Acts 16: 31.

Such was the reply of Paul and Silas to the jailor, who asked them, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Nor was a more important question ever asked, or answered. And as this answer is given by the inspiration of God, it is a true and sufficient one. It is a matter of infinite moment, then, that we get a right understanding of it, since a failure to do so might be ruinous to the soul. And as the object of this discourse is to point out the precise meaning

of this answer, should it not have the close and candid attention of every reader? I shall aim at truth, perspicuity and definiteness, even at the risk of being thought dry and tedious; for the nature and importance of the subject demands the utmost precision, plainness and simplicity.

Our single inquiry will be, WHAT IS SAVING FAITH? But we shall need to consider separately, What are its elements? and, What are its characteristics?

As used in its most extensive sense, faith is *belief on testimony*. And in its general, *religious* sense, it is a belief of what God has revealed in his written Word. Faith is a belief *with* trust, or *without* it. Without trust, it is purely an intellectual exercise. And it is connected with trust only, when something is expected to be done by its object. When God is its object, it is a reliance on his miraculous power, or his providence. It is the faith, therefore, which is so fully illustrated in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, and that which should always be

called into exercise in prayer. It is that also which supplies the saint with patience, energy, and courage through life; and is, therefore, of incalculable importance.

But *saving* faith is distinct and different from the foregoing; yet mainly in that it is more restricted and specific in its object and end. Its *object* is Christ — its “*end*, the salvation of the soul.” God, the Father, is never spoken of in Scripture as the object of it, except as being, through Christ, the Author of salvation: as in John 12: 44; 14: 1; and 1 Peter 1: 21. Nor is Christ himself its object as regards merely his power, goodness and truth. Saving faith looks mainly, if not exclusively, to that *atonement* and *righteousness* which he wrought out by his “obedience unto death” for the justification of all who believe. And salvation is its *end*, or aim: for it is its promised reward. — Acts 16: 30, 31; Heb. 10: 39; 1 Peter 1: 9.

This kind of faith is thought by too many to consist at most in a historic, intellectual belief, that Christ died for the redemption of sinners.

But neither Scripture nor reason will allow us to suppose, that God conditions the salvation of sinners on the bare fact of their *speculative*, perhaps their *involuntary* belief of the existence and mission of the Son of God. Such a belief had Simon Magus, and still remained "in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity." — Acts 8: 13, 23. And such a belief the devils have, yet continue to tremble under the impending wrath of God. — James 2: 19. And it is to be feared, that many in our day are confounding *speculative* with *saving* faith, and will be thereby lost forevermore. It is, therefore, immensely important that the difference between them should be made as distinct and plain as possible.

Few are aware how plainly, and how uniformly these two kinds of faith (the speculative and the saving) are distinguished in the original Greek of the New Testament. When the variations of the verb πιστεύω *pisteuo* are intended to express *saving* faith, their object, if expressed, is, with very few, if any exceptions, to be found in the *accusative case*, preceded by the preposition

ἐπι, *epi*, (rarely) or εἰς *eis* (usually.) And *never* is this form of expression used to express a faith that is merely speculative. Nearly sixty such passages may be found in the New Testament.

But when the same Greek verb is used to express a belief which is *not essential to salvation*, its object (if expressed) is usually, if not invariably found in the *dative* case, and mostly without a preposition. Nearly fifty such cases can be found. And, as I think, it was the intention of the Spirit to mark the distinction between these two kinds of faith by these two modes of expression. But let each one judge for himself. Both these classes of texts may be found in the note below. I have appended them, that the critical student may examine them at his leisure.*

* First class: Matt. 18: 6; Mark 9: 42; John 1: 12; 2: 11, 23; 3: 15, 16, 18, 36; 4: 39; 6: 29, 35, 40, 47; 7: 5, 31, 38, 39, 48; 8: 30; 9: 35, 36; 10: 42; 11: 25, 26, 45, 48; 12: 36, 37, 42, 44, 46; 14: 1, 12; 16: 9; 17: 20; Acts 9: 42; 10: 43; 11: 17; 14: 23; 16: 31; 19: 4; 22: 19; Rom. 4: 5, 24; 10: 14; Gal. 2: 16; Phil. 1: 29; 1 Pet. 1: 21: 1 John 5: 10, 13.

Second class: Matt. 21: 25, 32; 27: 42; Mark 1: 15; 11: 31; 16: 13, 14; Luke 1: 20; 20: 5; 24: 25; John 2: 22; 3: 36; 4: 21, 50; 5: 24, 38, 46, 47; 6: 30; 8: 31, 45, 46; 10: 37, 38; 11: 26; 12: 38;

Those who read these two classes of texts, even in our English translation, will find, on examining their connection, that the faith spoken of in the former is *saving* faith, while that spoken of in the latter has no immediate or positive connection with salvation. This difference then in the modes of expressing these

14: 11; Acts 8: 12; 13: 41; 16: 34; 18: 8; 24: 14; 26: 27; 27: 25; 28: 24; Rom. 10: 16; 11: 30; 2 Thess. 2: 11, 12; 2 Tim. 1: 12; 1 John 4: 1; and 5: 10.

I am aware that there are many passages containing apparent objections against the position which I have taken. But I am inclined to believe they are *only apparent*. Let us examine them. The first that I would notice is one in which the object of faith seems to be in the genitive. It is found in Rom. 4: 17, "Before him whom he (Abraham) believed, even God" According to this rendering, it seems to be God (in the genitive) that is the object of belief. Whereas, it is not God himself, but his *power* or *promise* understood. See Barnes and Hodge upon the place. And as the object of faith is not expressed, its case is not given. This passage affords, then, no objection to my position.

The next passages that we will notice are those in which the object of saving faith may be thought to be in the accusative, without the preposition *εις* or *επι*. The first of these is found in 1 Cor. 13: 7, Charity "*believeth* all things." It must be seen at once, that the belief here spoken of is not *saving* faith; for it has not the Savior for its object, but the conduct of our fellow men; and means nothing more than a disposition to regard such conduct favorably. The other passage is found in 1 John 4: 16, "And we have known and *believed* the love that God hath to us." Neither can this belief be *saving* faith; for its object is not Christ, but the love of God. Neither is it a faith which secures this love, but it is a belief that this love is *already* secured.

two kinds of faith is very striking. And it is the more emphatic, as some instances of both modes occur in immediate connection. One such is found in John 11 : 26, "And whosoever liveth and *believeth on me*, shall never die. *Believest thou this ?*" Belief, in the first clause, is *saving* faith, as its object is Christ, (in the accu-

The next that I would notice, is a passage in which the object of faith is in the accusative, with the preposition $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$, while it is thought that it is *not saving* faith. This is found in John 12 : 42, 43, "Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also, many *believed on him* ; but because of the Pharisees, they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Their refusal to profess Christ before men, for fear of displeasing the Pharisees, is thought to be evidence that theirs was not *saving* faith. But Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were probably among these "chief rulers." And they afterwards showed themselves to be the genuine disciples of Christ. See John 19 : 38, 39. At one time there were seven thousand secret saints in Israel, when the prophet thought he alone was left, and they sought his life. 1 Kings 19 : 10, 18. Nothing was so fearful to a Jew as to be put out of the synagogue. John 9 : 22, 23. And how many real Christians are at this day neglecting to profess religion, from worldly considerations, far less than the fear of persecution. But would they do so, if they regarded the approbation of God as much, and the displeasure of men as little as they ought ? Here, then, is no tenable objection.

But there are a number of passages in which the object of faith is in the dative, and yet it is claimed that the belief spoken of must be *saving* faith. We will notice them in their order.

John 3 : 36. "He that *believeth on the Son* hath everlasting life: and he that *believeth not* the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of

sative,) and secures eternal life. But the belief in the latter clause is not a reliance on Christ's atoning blood for salvation, but a speculative belief of the words which he had just been speaking: and therefore is not a belief which of itself secures salvation. Its object is, accordingly, in the dative.

God abideth on him." That the faith mentioned is the first clause of this passage is *saving*, all agree. For it is rendered from a variation of $\pi\iota\varsigma\ \tau\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\omega$ and its object is in the accusative, with $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$, and it has the promise of everlasting life. But the belief in the second clause, and whose object is in the dative, is rendered from another verb $\pi\epsilon\iota\theta\epsilon\omega$; and one never used to express *saving* faith. It signifies, at most, that speculative belief, the lack of which is as fatal to the soul as that of saving faith. And it is probable that John meant to charge this lack upon those hearers of Christ of whom he says, (v. 32,) "No man receiveth his testimony." Here, then, is no tenable objection.

John 5: 24, "He that heareth my word and believeth (on) him that sent me, hath everlasting life." It is said that as this belief has the promise of "everlasting life," it must be *saving* faith; and yet its object is in the dative. But the object of this belief is not Christ, but God, who sent him. Nor is the promise of eternal life made simply to the faith here expressed, but to *obedience*; for this is the meaning of hearing Christ's words, John 8: 47; 10: 26, compared with 27. And such hearing, of itself has promise of salvation. See Isa. 55: 3, and John 5: 25, compared with the previous verse.

John 5: 38, 46, 47, "And ye have not his word abiding in you; for whom he hath sent, *him* ye believe not. For had ye believed *Moses*, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not *his writings*, how can ye believe *my words*?" It is thought that in these words Christ charged the Jews with want of *saving* faith in him, though the objects of it are in the dative. But a close inspec-

Another instance is found in 1 John 5: 10, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." The belief mentioned in the first clause is confessedly a saving faith, as it has Christ for its object, and

tion of the connection of these verses will show him to be speaking only of speculative faith, for the object of this faith was not *himself*, or his righteousness, but his *words*. He charges them with the same unbelief toward himself that they had toward Moses. The only faith which he charged them with lacking was, a belief of the writings of Moses, and of his own words. The same may be said of John 8: 45, 46. "And because I tell you the truth, ye *believe me* not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And, if I say the truth, why do ye not *believe me*?" For, evidently the unbelief here spoken of is not a lack of reliance on Christ for salvation; but a disbelief of the truth which he had been just before teaching them.

Acts 5: 14. "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes, both of men and women." As the word rendered "believers" might be more literal, rendered those *believing*, the objector would render the passage, "Those believing the Lord were added," making "Lord" (in the dative) the object of *believing*. But I see nothing in the collocation of the words which requires such a translation of the passage: and must think our version of, "added to the Lord" is as proper here as in Acts 11: 24, "and much people was added to the Lord."

Acts 16: 34. "And when he [the jailor of Philippi] had brought them out into his own house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing God, with all his house." And as the word rendered "God," is in the dative, without a preposition, a more exact translation of the latter clause would be, "and rejoiced with," or over "all

as it brings the experimental evidence, or the witness of the Spirit, that we are the children of God. See Rom. 8: 16. And its object is, therefore, Christ, (with *εἰς* eis in the accusative.) But that in the next clause is *speculative*, for its object is not the Savior, but God the Father, and is in the dative. Yet, that in the third

his house, *believing God.*" But this could not have been that *saving* faith which Paul and Silas had previously enjoined on him, saying, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Doubtless he had complied with this condition of salvation, in the prison, and before he was baptized. Why, then, should his *saving* faith be spoken of again, and in so late a connection? No: evidently it is another kind of faith that is here mentioned: not a faith in Christ, but a belief of the God of Abraham; or rather, a belief of the covenant which God made with "the father of the faithful — a covenant pledging the salvation, not only of believers, but of their children — a covenant which he must have had in view, when he gave up his household in baptism. And as the *objects* of these two kinds of faith are different, so also were the results different. "Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ" secured his salvation. While "believing God," the God of the covenant caused him to rejoice in the prospect that his household would also be saved.

Acts 18: 8, "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed the Lord." It is contended by some, that this belief of Crispus was a *saving* faith; and yet its object is in the dative case, without a preposition. But there is no proof that he "believed to the *saving of the soul.*" It is said, he was baptized. 1 Cor. 1: 14. And so of Simon Magus; it is said he believed, and was baptized. Acts 8: 13. Yet Peter soon perceived him to be "in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity," v. 23. I do not affirm positively that Crispus had *not* saving faith. But I have as good a right to affirm it as

clause is *saving* faith, for its object, in the original, has εἰς eis with the accusative, and which is, by metonymy, Christ himself; for the record of God concerning his Son, viz, that eternal life is in him, (v. 11) is put for the Son himself. The whole passage may be paraphrased thus: He that hath saving faith on the Son of God

others have to affirm the opposite. For his subsequent character has not been given. If it had, we might have learned that he had no more "part nor lot in this matter" of salvation than Simon Magus had. The Acts of the Apostles were written some thirty years after the baptism of Crispus, by which time his character must have been developed. And for aught we know, when Luke penned them, he was aware that this "chief ruler of the synagogue" was a graceless man; and was led by the Spirit *so* to record this ruler's belief as not to indicate that he became a real Christian; but that he, like Simon, had *such* a belief of the truth of Christianity as led him for a while to favor, while others opposed it: and accordingly, he (Luke) was led so to express it as not to conflict with the doctrine of saints' perseverance.

2 Thess. 2: 12, "That they all might be damned that *believed* not the *truth*." It is supposed that the belief here mentioned must be *saving* faith, because the soul is lost for the lack of it; and yet its object is here in the dative. But the want of saving faith is not the only thing that insures damnation. The lack of *speculative* faith is just as fatal; for the former cannot exist without the latter. And that the belief spoken of in this passage is *speculative*, is the more evident because its object is not Christ, but "the truth;" and because it is evidently used in this verse as in the foregoing verse, believing *not* the truth being the same as to "believe a lie." And damnable delusions are as fatal, certainly, as the mere want of saving faith. Yet a bare belief of the truth will not secure salvation.

hath the witness of his salvation within himself. He that discredits God, hath made him a liar : for, by not relying for salvation on him whom God has recorded to be the Savior of sinners, he has practically disbelieved God, and thus made him a liar.

And there is yet another instance, although

2 Tim. 1: 12, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day." The object of the belief here spoken of, is either God or Christ, and is in the dative. But there is no positive proof that this belief is simply a *saving* faith. For the apostle is not speaking here of his salvation; but of his sufferings in consequence of preaching the Gospel. He was then a prisoner in Rome, and expecting soon to suffer death. In the eighth verse of the context, he exhorts Timothy not to be ashamed of the testimony of Christ, or of his apostle, though in prison, expecting speedy death: 2 Tim. 4: 6; but to bear "the afflictions of the Gospel, according to the power of God." And here he urges him to it by his own example, since he *also* was suffering these things without being ashamed. He then gives the reason why he was not ashamed. It was because he "knew on whom he had believed." Did he mean by this only that he knew in whom he had relied for salvation? I think not. For he needed something more to support him in his present trials than the hope of final salvation. And something more, I think, he had. It was a reliance on the power and promise of God to carry him triumphantly through all his trials; and to make them a great gain, not only to himself, but those among whom he had ministered. For he told the Romans, (1: 16,) the reason he was "not ashamed of the Gospel" was, that it was "the power of God unto salvation," not to himself merely, but "to every one that believeth." As he began his Chris-

it is not so obvious as the foregoing. It is found in John 8: 30, 31, "As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." As the belief mentioned in the first of these verses is followed by the accusative, and the

tian career by inquiring, not what he must do to be saved? but, as the answer to the question shows, "what the Lord would have him do" for the salvation of others? and as the salvation of others was the all-absorbing object of his life, we can hardly suppose he would mention the hope of his own salvation as the only reason why he was not ashamed of what he was suffering for the good of others. What is here translated, "that which I have committed," means *my deposit*, and may be what grammarians call "a noun of multitude," including not only his salvation, but his reputation, and all his interests. Paul meant, evidently, to say, that he "committed his whole way unto the Lord; trusted also in him to bring it to pass: to bring forth his righteousness as the light, and his judgment as the noon-day." Ps. 37: 5, 6. And as his faith had regard to something beside his own salvation, its object *should* be in the dative.

Tit. 3: 8, "That they which *believe* God might be careful to maintain good works." Here, too, the object of belief is in the dative, without a preposition. But there is no evidence that this is simply a *saving* faith. The passage expresses no definite reliance on Christ for salvation, but a general belief of the authority and truth of God. If Paul here intended to teach only, that *saving* faith binds us to good works, he does not teach the whole truth. For *speculative* faith does the same, though with less power; for "to him that *knoweth* to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin," emphatically. James 4: 17. If we believe God has a right to command, we are the more sinful if we do not obey.

other by the dative, it may be thought that the two forms are used indiscriminately, to signify the same kind of faith. But a closer examination will show the contrary. For why the variation in the expression, if not to mark a variation of its meaning? Why, in one instance, is the object of belief in the accusative, preceded

1 John 3: 23, "And this is his commandment, That we should *believe* the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." Here, too, is the object of belief in the dative, without a preposition. And here, too, there is no proof that it is restricted to a reliance on *Christ for salvation*. Would saving faith be urged on those who had it already? The "name of Christ" often means his authority or power. As in Matt. 7: 22; Acts 3: 6, 16; and many other places. And in this place, the Apostle is evidently urging saints, not to salvation, but to *obedience*, and therefore to keep the authority of Christ more in mind, that they might abound the more in obedience to his commandment to love one another. The belief here enjoined, then, has a wider range than *saving* faith. Its object is, therefore, properly in the dative.

It is true, however, that there are several passages in which $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omega$ is used in some relation to salvation, though its object is in the dative. But they are quotations from the Old Testament. And it is admitted by commentators, that such quotations from the Old to the New Testament are not always intended to be *exact* proofs of the point in hand — that often they are intended to be only approximate proofs — nay, mere illustrations of it: as, Hos. 11: 1; Matt. 2: 15. Three of these passages, Rom 4: 3; Gal. 3: 6; and James 2: 23, refer to Gen. 15: 6 — "And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." But the connection with the previous verse shows that this faith of Abraham was not a definite trust in Christ for his personal salvation, but a belief that

by the usual preposition; while in the other, its object is in the dative, *without* a preposition? Why, but to mark the same difference which is marked by the same means in the two passages next above noticed? The evangelist evidently intended to teach, that "as Jesus spake these words," many exercised a saving faith in

his seed should be as numberless as the stars. Nor did the salvation of Abraham depend entirely on the faith here ascribed to him, as the salvation of saints does on their belief in Christ for eternal life. The object of Abraham's faith, then, *should* be in the dative.

The other quotations are: Rom. 9: 33; 10: 11; and 1 Pet. 2: 6; and refer to Isa. 28: 16 — "Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." And none of these passages promise, definitely, salvation to the believer, but that he "shall not make haste" — "shall not be ashamed" — "shall not be confounded." Salvation, undoubtedly, is *included* in these promises; but not salvation *alone*. And as the promise is indefinite, so the faith is also indefinite.

But the strongest objection to the position which I have taken is found in 1 Tim. 1: 16, "Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." According to this, our common translation, the faith spoken of is *saving*, for it is to life everlasting. And yet, unlike any other instance, except three quotations from the Septuagint of the Old Testament, its object is in the dative, with the preposition ἐπί. I confess my inability to obviate this objection to my position, in a way satisfactory to myself. And yet it seems to me not impossible. As the sacred writers, under the direction of inspiration, have kept to a certain form of expression in nearly, and, as I think, in all

him; and then, that he said to all the rest of them, who only believed him to be a teacher of the truth, "If *ye* live in obedience to my words, then shall ye be my disciples *indeed*." For, if they become obedient to his instructions, they would have *saving*, as well as speculative faith. And that some of them to whom he

other cases, why should they depart from it in this? There are some considerations which incline me still to think, that the belief here spoken of is *not saving* faith. They are the following:

Paul evidently intended to teach that Christ's long-suffering to him was for the purpose of encouraging others to secure salvation. But such encouragement could take effect with them only when they had *speculative*, but not *saving* faith. And should not the passage have, therefore, been rendered as follows: "Howbeit, I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all *long-suffering to life everlasting*, for a pattern to them who should hereafter *believe him*." And does not Peter refer to this passage, and to this meaning of it, when he says, "And account that the *long-suffering of our Lord is salvation*; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you?" 2 Peter 3: 15. For his epistle is thought by chronologists to have been written six years after Paul's to Timothy. If it be said the arrangement of the words in the original forbids the arrangement which I have given in the translation, I would ask, may there not have been another reading of the passage?

But if the arrangement now proposed must be given up, I would inquire, whether εἰς, in the last clause of the passage, may not mean here, as in Matt. 6: 34, *for, concerning, and in respect to?* and the clause itself be rendered, "believe him for [as to, or in respect to,] life everlasting;" not intending to assert that life everlasting was thereby actually secured? If so, the faith here spoken of

spoke this, had not yet "believed to the saving of the soul," is evident from their cavils and conduct, recorded in verses 33-45.

I will not say how full and exact a knowledge of the way of life the sinner must have before he can secure salvation. Before the coming of Christ, all saints must have had but very indis-

is not necessarily a saving faith. These believers needed the example of God's long-suffering to Paul, to encourage them to a *saving* trust in Christ.

But even if this must be admitted to be a "believing to the saving of the soul," it does not invalidate my position. For be it remembered, I have not insisted that the dative case is never used after a verb expressing *saving* faith. I *only* insist, that, when the object of the verb $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omega$ is found in the accusative case, preceded by the preposition $\epsilon\pi\iota$, or $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$, it never expresses a mere *speculative* faith. See page 109. What, then, if the object of *saving* faith is sometimes found in the *dative*? Still, it holds true, that the object of *speculative* faith is never found in the accusative.

It is true that when faith is expressed in Greek by the *noun* $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$, its object, in some rare instances, is in the dative, with the preposition $\epsilon\nu$. But even then it is doubtful whether *saving* faith is intended. But I say again, all now insisted on is, that Christ alone, [or God through him as the Author of salvation,] is the only object of this faith: and that, when it is expressed by any variation of the *verb* $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omega$ and its object is in the accusative, preceded by $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$, or $\epsilon\pi\iota$, it *never* necessarily means mere *speculative* faith; but evidently that which secures salvation. And it seems to me, that a distinction so striking and uniform, is of great importance: the more so, as many are in danger of confounding the two kinds of belief to their eternal undoing. As many of the impenitent have an intellectual, historic belief of the truth of God's word,

tinct views of it. So also must many who are now converted in childhood, or among the heathen. And sometimes, too, we find real Christians in Churches that are exceedingly heterodox. But the more exact and complete our understanding of the conditions of salvation, the better we shall be prepared to find the gate of life ourselves, and to point it out to others. It is particularly important to have correct and precise views of the nature of *saving* faith. It is, therefore, desirable that it be as plainly distinguished from *speculative* faith in the English, as it is in the Greek. And though this may not be done by words or phrases, it can be described by describing its elements and its characteristics.

I cannot think, with Dr. L. Woods, that saving faith is not exactly described in the Bible; and that this is because, it either is not necessary, or not possible, so to describe it. If a

and even of the mission of Christ for salvation, they are in danger of thinking they have all the faith that Christians have. Indeed, it is much to be feared that many professors of religion are in danger of mistaking their speculative faith for that whose "end is the salvation of the soul." And if the distinction can be made more evident, by referring to the original, it is important to do so.

man needs to do something, he needs to understand *what that something is*. And though the Scriptures do not describe this faith exactly in *literal*, they do in figurative language. They describe it as a *seeking* and *finding* of Christ. Prov. 8: 17. As a *coming* to him for eternal life.—John 5: 40. As *asking, seeking, and knocking*.—Matt. 7: 7. In these and other passages, the Bible teaches, that this faith involves the idea of an *application* to Christ, or rather to God through him. It is described also to be an *acceptance* of salvation, as offered in the Gospel—a “*taking* of the water of life freely.” Rev. 22: 17.

But the main element of *saving* faith is *trust* in Christ, for pardon and eternal life.* It is

* The same Greek verb expresses both kinds of belief. But in doing so, it does not vary its meaning more than many English verbs. *Love*, for instance, is the exercise both of good will, and of approbation. And these are so different, that we may both love and hate a man at the same time. So, the meaning of to *hear*, to *know*, to *call*, and many other words, is equally variant. But we have said the meaning of $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omega$ is varied by the adjuncts [preposition and cases] that follow it. And such, too, is the fact with many English words. For instance, to *hold* a man means to keep him from getting away: while to hold *to* a man, means to be dragged along by him, or to adopt his opinions. And the meanings of many other words are in this way equally varied.

relying on him alone, as both able and willing "to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God through him." Heb. 7: 25. *Able*, because "he is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world:" 1 John 2: 2. And "seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. 7: 25. And *willing*, because he said "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." John 6: 37. And it is relying on him *alone*; because, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4: 12. It involves, therefore, a renunciation of all other dependencies; especially all dependence on our own works — "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." Gal. 2: 16.

Saving faith is very different, then, from a mere historic belief of what the Bible reveals respecting the Agent and plan of salvation. While those who have the latter only, will venture nothing on Christ, they who have the

former, commit to him their everlasting all. Their reliance on him may be faintly illustrated by the following anecdote. A physician, on a very stormy night, had occasion to cross Cayuga Lake, in order to visit a very sick patient. And dangerous as was the passage, the ferryman consented to attempt it, on one condition. It was, that the doctor should lie perfectly quiet, on his back, in the bottom of the skiff, and leave the entire management of the craft to its owner. The condition was complied with; and, consequently the passage safely made. Yet, had the physician not kept quiet, but insisted, in his fear or self-sufficiency, on helping the ferryman, the result would probably have been fatal. And so, if the sinner insists in doing part of the work of his redemption, he must be lost. If, then, we can understand what it is to trust ourselves entirely to the promise and power of our fellow men, we can understand what it is to rely entirely and alone on Christ for salvation.

Many have *speculative*, while they have not

saving faith. Yet they cannot have the latter, without the former. For, none can trust Christ for salvation who have no knowledge or belief of his existence and mission. Faith, we have seen, is coming to him for pardon and eternal life. But as "he that cometh to God," so he that cometh to Christ, "must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Heb. 11 : 6. And, "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" Rom. 10 : 14.

Some insist, that the first exercise of saving faith consists in believing that Christ died for *us in particular*; and consequently that salvation is ours *already*. But this would be believing without evidence, and therefore be presumption, rather than faith. Nay, it would be believing *what is not true*. For we are not in a state of salvation, till we *have* faith: for Christ himself has told us, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not on him, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only be-

gotten Son of God." John 3 : 18. To believe on him "to the saving of the soul" is, according to the teaching of the text, to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," so that we "shall be saved:" and not to believe we are saved *already*. The Scriptures teach us we are in danger of delusive hopes; and therefore urge us to examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith. But if faith consists in believing we *are* saved, there is no possibility of our having false hopes.

The distinction between *speculative* and *saving* faith, which we have been considering, will aid us much in settling several questions, which, at some times and places, have been much debated. One is, whether faith is the Christian's *first* holy exercise. Many insist that it is so, because, as they allege, we must have some belief of God before we can either obey him, or repent of our disobedience. And it is indeed true, that some *intellectual, historic* belief of him, must go before these gracious exercises. But such a belief is not *saving*; nor is it necessarily of a gracious or holy character. Here,

then, is no proof that saving faith is the first *Christian* exercise.

Another question is, whether *speculative* faith enters into the *essence* of *saving* faith. Many who make a distinction between the two, insist, nevertheless, that the *former* is one of the elements of the latter. And indeed such a notion seems to be taught in our Presbyterian Confession of Faith. Under chapter 14 of Saving Faith, in Sec. 2, it says, "By this faith, a Christian *believeth to be true* whatever is revealed in the Word. But the *principal* acts of saving faith are, accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace." But I would say, the *ONLY* acts of saving faith are, accepting, receiving and relying upon Christ alone, et cetera. It seems plain to me, that *speculative* faith is as distinct from *saving* faith as *love* is from either of them. On the one hand, I love Christ, because I believe his character is lovely. But who would think of saying my belief of his excellent character is a part

of my love. I may be convinced of his loveliness without loving him. And on the other hand, I trust in Christ for salvation, because I believe he is trustworthy. Who, then, should insist that my belief of his ability and willingness to save is a part of my actual trust in him? I may believe him trustworthy, and yet not be willing to trust him. And if I afterwards do trust him, this is another and altogether different exercise from that of judging respecting the character of Christ. The truth is, that saving faith is full reliance on the Son of God for salvation; nor is it anything else. And the more completely it is separated in our minds from every other kind of faith, the better. For, then we can understand it ourselves, and make others understand it more easily; thus avoiding that indistinctness which has been to many so ruinous.

But the *characteristics* of saving faith should also share our exact attention. For we need their aid in keeping ourselves and others from fatal delusion on this subject. We have already

had occasion to remark, that the grand peculiarity of this faith is, that Christ is its only *object*, and salvation its only *end*. While, in order to secure salvation, we must have "*repentance toward God,*" we must have "*faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Acts 20: 21. Old Testament saints had to look darkly through a glass of types and shadows, believing on a Savior to come; while *we* look back through Gethsemane and Calvary, and "*behold the Lamb of God,*" who has long since been offered there, to "*take away the sin of the world.*" There is much faith of reliance on other beings. There *is* much, and there *should be* more in God, the Father, and for various purposes. But the peculiarity of saving faith is, that it is a reliance on God, the Son, for pardon and eternal life, through his atoning blood.

Another characteristic of this faith is, that it is *always and altogether voluntary*. Not so with that which is *speculative*. We are often compelled to believe what we wish to *disbelieve*. Often, too, are we unable to believe what we

wish to think is true. And in many cases our belief is but *indirectly* voluntary. Our likes and dislikes to certain facts or propositions, bias and warp our minds, so that we receive or reject them according to our inclinations. But they do so, by causing us to dwell longer on the testimonies that are welcome, than on those that are unwelcome to us: and thus the agreeable ones make too much, and the others too little impression on our minds; thereby misleading us as to the balance of testimony. It is this alone that makes us accountable for our opinions and principles. But *saving* faith is always a direct and simple act of choice. Pardon and eternal life are offered us on the single condition of our willing reliance on Christ for them. And we either choose or refuse the offer. If, then, we comply with the condition, by exercising faith in Christ, it is simply because we *choose* to do so. It is true, that we must be prepared for this choice by a previous belief of Christ's ability and readiness to save us. But this belief is speculative; and saving faith follows it, as an

after and separate act — an act, too, not only distinct, but different, as we have already seen. And while the one is only an *intellectual*, the other is a *moral* act.

Another of these characteristics is *love to holiness and holy beings*. Paul tells us, "*Faith worketh by love.*" Gal. 5 : 6. And evangelical Christians seem generally to suppose that love is a component part of this saving grace. But it is most evident that they are entirely distinct and different exercises. Loving Christ is one thing, and trusting him is altogether another thing; yet they always go together. Where saving faith is found, love will *also* be found. The absence of the latter is, then, full evidence of the absence of the former.

It is often asked whether love to Christ must not *precede* faith? And the right answer is, The presence of love is not at all necessary to *speculative* faith. And as to *saving* faith, it must *precede* it, or at least be *simultaneous* with it. As the impenitent love sin, they consequently hate holiness. They, therefore, hate

Christ, not only for his intrinsic holiness, but because of his purpose and efforts to save them from sin itself, as well as from its punishment. Matt. 1: 21; Acts 3: 26. And one reason why they refuse to rely on him for salvation is, they hate to be beholden for this favor to one whom they dislike. While another reason is, they are loth to leave their cherished sins. Though a man have a painful and dangerous disease, he does not like to go for relief to a physician whom he hates. Much less will he go, if he loves his disease (as the drunkard does his appetite;) and therefore hates those the more who are anxious to cure him. But if this enmity to holiness and holy beings be displaced by love to them, there will be nothing to hinder his casting himself upon Christ for deliverance, as well from the sins which he now hates, as from the wrath which he now fears. Love to holiness and holy beings is not only an invariable and necessary attendant on saving faith; but is an important criterion by which to distinguish it from a mere intellectual belief;

since the one *can*, and the other *cannot* exist without this holy love. And by this criterion, all should examine themselves, to see whether they are in the faith, or whether they are reprobrates.

But as we are in danger of thinking we have love to Christ, while we have none, it is important to name another characteristic of saving faith. It is, its *activity*. It "*worketh* by love."—Gal. 5: 6. And this distinguishes it from that speculative faith, which, being without works, is dead, and cannot save.—James 2: 14, 17. To them that savingly believe, Christ is precious.—1 Peter 2: 7. They will, therefore, be prompted by their regard to him, to please and honor him by obeying his commandments. He says, therefore, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."—John 14: 21. And Paul says, "The love of Christ constraineth us." 2 Cor. 5: 14. He says also, "Love is the fulfilling of the law."—Rom. 13: 10. And John says, "This is the love of God, that we keep

his commandments." — 1 John 5: 3. All, then, who love God, will be obedient. Literally speaking, it is love alone that prompts us to obey. Faith does it, indirectly, as Judas purchased the Potter's field. — Acts 1: 18. It augments the love of believers. It makes Christ the more precious to them. And it increases their courage, by pointing them to "the Author and Finisher of their faith," who is always willing and "able to succor them," and who will make them "more than conquerors," in all their conflicts. And the greater their love and courage, the more abundant their obedience.

Saving faith is said, also, to "purify the heart." — Acts 15: 9. And to "overcome the world." — 1 John 5: 4. Yet these operations are but two branches of that one work which love is said to promote. "The love of Christ constraineth us" to avoid evil, because it is so offensive to him; and to do good, because it is so pleasing to him on whom we rely for life everlasting." And it is by yielding thus to

the promptings of love, that we "*purify our hearts*, by obeying the truth, through the Spirit." — 1 Peter 1 : 22.

"The world," which is said to be "overcome" by faith, is not this material planet, nor its inhabitants; but its spirit, maxims, and practices — called in Scripture, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." — 1 John 2 : 16 ; or worldly pleasures, riches and honors, as well as "the course of this world." — Eph. 2 : 2. The most decisive battle in this "good fight of *faith*" is fought, when we first renounce the world as a portion, and its God as our master; and when we first choose heaven as our portion, and the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest and King. Moses fought it most illustriously, when, "By *faith* he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." — Heb. 11 : 24-26.

But a single victory, however signal, does not complete the conquest. The warfare thus victoriously commenced against "the world" not only, but the "flesh and the devil," must be continuously prosecuted against these vanquished, but not yet exterminated foes—a warfare lasting as life: for only "he that endureth to the end shall be saved." Yet none who commence this "good fight of faith" aright, will in any wise fail to "lay hold on eternal life" in the end. For all true believers will be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."—1 Peter 1: 5.

Here then, in brief, is the nature of saving faith. It is not merely an intellectual belief of the faithful saying, "that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;" but the actual coming to him, that we may have life.—John 5: 40. It is not a bare belief of the promise, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out," but it is the positive approach and application to him for the salvation which he promises to those only who knock at the door

of mercy. It is not believing that he knocks at our hearts, but an actual opening to him. — Rev. 3: 20. Nay, rather, it is the *acceptance* of Christ, as the *way*, the *truth*, and the *life*. It is “entering in by him, that we may be saved.” It is not a mere historic belief of the momentous truth, that salvation has been provided for sinners; but it is a coming to, and “taking of the water of life freely.” It is a “laying hold on eternal life.” More literally, to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” so as to be saved, is TO TRUST HIM. It is to rely upon him for pardon and eternal life, through the merit of his atoning blood.

And here too, as briefly, we have those characteristics which distinguish this from all other kinds of faith. It has Christ, as the Savior, for its only object, and salvation for its only end. It is always voluntary, being invariably the direct result of deliberate choice. It is always associated with love of holiness, and holy beings, and through this love, it invariably prompts to evangelical obedience, thereby purifying the heart, and overcoming the world.

Thus end my efforts to simplify and elucidate the subject of saving faith. But I have not accomplished all I have aimed at, unless I have not only corrected some important and prevailing errors respecting it, and have removed much of that mist of indefiniteness which has too long enveloped it; but have furnished my readers sufficient criteria by which to judge exactly what kind of faith they have, or must have, in order to be saved! I would that I had made the subject more plain. Yet I cannot but think, that those who give this discourse a critical and candid attention, will be able to see whether they have a good hope through grace, and if they have not, what faith they have yet to exercise in order to eternal life.

As, then, all must exercise a particular kind of faith, that they may escape eternal wo, and secure eternal blessedness, it is infinitely important, that all who profess to be Christians should "examine themselves"—whether they be in the faith, or whether they be reprobates.—2 Cor. 13: 5. For, as "the heart is deceit-

ful above all things," and as there prevails much ignorance and error on this subject, it is to be feared that many are trusting for salvation to a faith no better than that of Simon Magus, who in some sort "believed," but who had neither part nor lot in this way of salvation. None should be satisfied with their hopes, however long they may have cherished them, unless they are clearly conscious, that this way of salvation, through the atonement of Christ, has the full consent and desire of their hearts; and unless they find their faith attended by that love to holiness and holy beings, which evinces itself by holy obedience. And all should "show their faith by their works" — James 2: 18, not only to convince others that they are Christians, but to show the fallacy of the infidel, and legal cavil, *that the doctrine of salvation by grace tends to encourage immorality.*

Especially is it important, that this subject should be duly examined by those who, as yet, are "without hope," and are living avowedly "without God in the world." It is a matter of

infinite moment to such, that they understand precisely *what kind of faith they must yet have in exercise*, in order to escape the final wrath of God. And I cannot but hope, that the foregoing remarks will be found to set this subject in a clearer, *distincter* light, than that in which it is often exhibited. Still, however, the impenitent reader will need to give it much close attention, in order to an adequate understanding of it. He should ponder most solemnly, the momentous truth, "That there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," but that of Christ, Acts 4: 12; and that if he "neglect this great salvation, he cannot escape the damnation of hell." — Heb. 2: 3. He should consider, too, that this coming to Christ, and this committing of his salvation to him alone, must be a step of his own, and one most *voluntarily* and *deliberately* taken. And most especially should he consider the importance of taking that step *without delay*, as life and probation are utterly uncertain, and as every moment's

refusal to accept salvation abuses the grace, wearies the patience, and provokes the wrath of Him who offers it. If, then, he would ensure eternal life, he should "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" without the least delay. For as he has "been often reproved," if he "hardeneth his neck" any longer, there is a fearful probability, that he will be "suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy."

SERMON VI.

SALVATION BY THE ATONEMENT

AND NOT BY THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”—Acts 16: 31.

In a former discourse on these words, we attempted to ascertain the nature of saving faith, and found it to be a *reliance on Christ* for pardon and salvation. In that discourse, it was occasionally yet briefly stated, that this reliance is not on the *power, goodness or truth* of Christ, but on the *atonement and righteousness* which he wrought out for us by his “obedience

unto death." But, as many doubt whether he did die as our substitute, in order that we may for his sake be forgiven and saved, it is needful to give the question a more extended and particular notice. And although the number of the quotations, and the compactness of the arguments require a close attention, it is hoped the importance of the subject will secure such attention.

It is insisted by not a few, that we are saved wholly by virtue of the *doctrines, precepts* and *example* of Christ: and that his death was needful only to attest the truth and importance of what he taught: in other words, that he died only as a *martyr* to his *doctrines*, and not as a *sacrifice* for our *sins*: consequently, that we are saved by virtue of our obeying his instructions, and following his example; and not on the ground of his suffering in our behalf. Nor will it be denied, that we must follow the instructions and example of Christ, in order to be saved. For, "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." And it was on this account

that he said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" likewise, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." And in another of these discourses it will be seen, that such reformation and sanctification are necessary, to fit us for the duties and enjoyments of heaven.

But the work of our salvation consists, not only in sanctification, but in justification. In our native state, we are all sinful, guilty and condemned creatures. For "there is no man that liveth and sinneth not." And, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." "So, death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." We are all condemned for our sins, to eternal death. To be saved, then, is to be delivered from this condemnation. And how can this be done? It is by justification. But "how can man be just with God?" Or rather, how can God "be just in justifying the ungodly?" Not by a *literal* and *legal* justification; for as man has sinned, God can neither *make* nor *declare* his past conduct to be just. It is not by *undoing*,

or by *denying* their sins, that he “justifieth the ungodly; but by promising to treat them as *if* they never had sinned. This is evangelical, or Gospel justification; and is allied, therefore, to pardon, forgiveness, or the remission of sins.

But sometimes sinners are represented in Scripture as offenders against God, “condemned already;” and thus exposed to his indignation and wrath. And the work of their salvation is, therefore, represented as a *propitiation* that pacifies the divine displeasure, and brings man into peace with his Maker. And for the same reason, it is called reconciliation. Sometimes, too, they are represented as in *bondage*, being slaves to sin and Satan. And then their deliverance is represented as a redemption, ransom and purchase, by which they are “delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” The great question, then, is, *How is this done?* How do sinners secure *justification, pardon, forgiveness, remission of sins, propitiation, reconciliation, redemption and ransom?* Is it by

simply following the example and precepts of Christ? What saith Scripture? I have searched extensively, to find one passage which seems to teach that sinners can secure them in this way, and searched in vain. But I find many a passage which teaches that they come by the atoning blood of Christ. Let us look at some of them.

Let us look, first, at justification. This, we have said, is treating those as righteous who have no righteousness of their own. But this is done by applying to them the righteousness of another. It is called "the righteousness of God, and of our Savior Jesus Christ."—2 Pet. 1: 1. It is God's, because he appointed it.—Rom. 3: 25; 2 Cor. 5: 21. And it is also called the righteousness of Christ, because he provided it.—Rom. 10: 4; 1 Cor. 1: 30. And he evidently did it not by his *instructions*, but by "giving his life a ransom for many."—Matt. 20: 28. By "laying down his life for his sheep."—John 10: 15. And by being "made a curse for us."—Gal. 3: 13; which he did,

when he “bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” — 1 Pet. 2 : 24 ; and this “righteousness is unto justification of life.” — Rom. 5 : 18. “For he hath made him to be *sin* for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” — 2 Cor. 5 : 21. But how, if justification comes by our obedience ?

And how are we to *secure* the righteousness thus provided. Not (as we saw in the previous discourse) by speculatively believing Christ’s *words* ; but by believing *IN himself*. Saving faith is a trust in him which has a regard to his righteousness. It is therefore called “the righteousness of faith.” — Rom. 4 : 13 ; 10 : 4 ; 6 : 10. And therefore it is, that justification on the ground of this righteousness, is also said to be of faith. “By him,” Christ, “all that *believe are justified* from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. — Acts 13 : 39. “Therefore, we conclude a man is *justified by faith* without the deeds of the law.” — Rom. 3 : 28. “Therefore being *justified by faith*, we have peace with God through our

Lord Jesus Christ. For when we were yet without strength, Christ died for the *ungodly*." — Rom. 5 : 1; 6.

Said God of his Son, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall *bear their iniquities*."—Isa. 53 : 11. But though we should suppose, that by knowledge, is here meant the teachings of Christ, we are not to understand by the passage, that we are justified simply by believing and obeying them. These instructions are necessary, not to justify us, but to teach us *how* we are to be justified, which is by his righteousness. And therefore it is added, "*for he shall bear their iniquities*," since it was by bearing our iniquities in his own body on the tree, that he wrought out for us a justifying righteousness; and in confirmation of this, we are declared to be justified freely, not by his teachings, but "by his grace through the *redemption* of Christ."—Rom. 3 : 24; and this is "redemption through his blood."—Eph. 1 : 7. Accordingly we are told that he "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again

for our *justification*.”—Rom. 4: 25. And again we are directly declared to be “justified by his blood.”—5: 9. We are also said to be justified *without works and by grace*.”—Gal. 2: 16; Titus 3: 7. All of which is completely incompatible with justification by obedience to the doctrines and precepts of Christ.

But as we have said, justification is much the same as *forgiveness* or *remission of sins*. And this we are told is not because of our obedience to Christ’s instructions, but “through his blood.”—Eph. 1: 7. Col. 1: 14. Also “for Christ’s sake, and “for his name sake;”—Eph. 4: 32, 1 John 2: 12, which sake evidently refers not to *our* obedience to his instructions, but to his obedience unto death. And he tells us “his blood is shed for many, for the remission of sins.”—Mat. 26: 28.

Again, we have seen that sinners are regarded as under bondage to sin and satan, and their deliverance is spoken of as a *redemption, ransom* or *purchase*; and the Scriptures teach us, that the price by which they are bought out of

bondage, is not their obedience to the doctrines and precepts of Christ, but his own blood upon the cross. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."—Gal. 3: 13. "In whom we have *redemption* through his *blood*."—Eph. 1: 7. "By his own blood he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal *redemption* for us."—Heb. 9: 12. "Thou wast slain and hast *redeemed* us to God by thy blood."—Rev. 5: 9. "Redeemed— with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot."—1 Peter 1: 18, 19. "Even as the Son of man came—to *give his life a ransom* for many."—Mat. 20: 28; Mark 10: 45. "Who gave himself a *ransom* for all."—1 Tim. 2: 6. In 1 Cor. 6: 20; 7: 23; and 2 Peter 2: 1; saints are said to be bought with a price out of the service of satan, into the service of Christ. And in Acts 20: 28, the whole Church of God is said to be "purchased with his own blood."

Yet again, we have seen that sinners are

under the *wrath* of that God who is “angry with the wicked every day;” and that therefore their salvation is a *reconciliation* or *propitiation*. And how is this effected? Not by the teachings, but by the *death* of Christ. Paul tells us, “that when we were enemies, we were *reconciled* to God by the death of his Son.”—Rom. 5: 10. “And having made peace through the *blood of his cross*, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; and you, hath he *reconciled* in the body of his flesh through death.”—Col. 1: 20–22. “Whom God hath set forth to be a *propitiation* through faith in his *blood*.”—Rom. 3: 25.

Beside the foregoing, there are many other passages of the word of God, which show with equal plainness, that Christ died, not as a *martyr* to his doctrines, but as a *sacrifice* for the sins of men. His death was typified by the Jewish sacrifices, in which the blood of beasts was intended to represent that “blood” of the one great sacrifice, which “cleanseth from all sin.” They show, therefore, that he died to

make an atonement by which sinners might be saved. God said by Moses, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul." — Lev. 17: 11. And according to the Jewish ritual, the high priest offered a bloody sacrifice for the people; and then went into the most holy place to make intercession for them. And in allusion to this, the apostle says, "But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his *own blood* he entered in once into the holy place, having *obtained eternal redemption* for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from

dead works to serve the living God." — Heb. 9: 11–14. And the same is reiterated in the next verse. The same is taught too, in Heb. 7: 22–27; and 9: 24–28. Therefore said Christ, "This is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." — Mat. 26: 28. And therefore, also said the apostle, "The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin." — 1 John 1: 7. But what is the use of the blood of Christ, if all that is needed to secure salvation is to follow the instructions and example of Christ? No, Christ is not only our Prophet to *instruct* us, but our High Priest to make *atonement* and intercession for us. And this he did when offering up himself on the cross, and ascending to heaven to be our "advocate with the Father." — Heb. 7: 27; 1 John 2: 1.

So also was the paschal lamb of the Jewish ritual, "a *shadow* of things to come," while the "the body is of Christ." — Col 2: 17. John Baptist therefore said of him, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the

world." — John 1 : 29. And Paul said of him, "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." — 1 Cor. 5 : 7. It is said of Moses, (and the same is true of other Old Testament saints) that "*through faith*, he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood (on the door posts) lest he that destroyed the first-born (of Egypt) should touch them." — Heb. 11 : 28. For they looked through these types to Christ, the great antitype. And saints are now saved by faith in the "*sprinkling* of the blood of Jesus Christ. — 1 Peter 1 : 2.

The foregoing facts furnish us abundant evidence, that men are saved by the atonement of Christ, and not simply by his instructions and example. But other considerations will be added.

If we are saved solely by following the teachings and example of Christ, why is he so often said to die for us? In more than twenty instances is his vicarious death asserted. Out of these passages, let us look at one in particular. It is found in 1 Thes. 5 : 9-10. "For

God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain *salvation* by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us." If we are delivered from wrath by virtue of instruction alone, why are we said to be saved by Christ, any more than by other religious teachers? And if he died only as a martyr, why was it added, "who died for us?" Why is not the same sometimes said of other martyrs, that they died for sinners? especially Zebedee's children, who in Mat. 20: 22, are said to suffer the same as Christ. And why indeed should he die at all, if his death was not needed to make atonement for our sins? If it be insisted that he died as a martyr, to attest the truth of his teachings, why do not the Scriptures sometimes say so? Why in more than a score of instances do they say, he died *for us*, and never that he died for the truth? * And why do they say so often, that we are justified and redeemed by his blood, but

*Isa. 53: 8; John 10: 15, 17, 18; Rom. 5: 6, 8; 1 Cor. 5: 7; 8: 11; 15: 3; 2 Cor. 5: 14, 15, 21; Gal. 1: 4; 2: 20; Eph. 5: 2-25; 1 Thess. 5: 10; Heb. 2: 9; 9: 28; 1 Peter 2: 24; 3: 18; Rev. 5: 9; 13: 8.

never by his doctrines and precepts? In other words, why is our salvation always referred directly to his death, and never to his doctrines? Can we believe that if his death were a mere martyrdom, it would have been so often spoken of as if it were a positive sacrifice for sin?

But again, what evidence is there that Christ did die as a martyr, any more emphatically than many others, or that he needed so to die? The ostensible reason for which the Jews put him to death was, that he claimed to be the Son of God, thus "making himself equal with God." But those who insist that he died only as a martyr, generally deny that he claimed in this sense, to be the Son of God. Yet suppose, as some insist, he died to attest the truth of his teachings, of the fact that the Jewish economy was to give way to the Christian dispensation. Why, then, is it not directly said so? And if he really did die for this purpose only, why are not Stephen, the apostles and other martyrs to be called *saviors*, as well as Jesus of Nazareth?

Many of them taught the truth as much, and as successfully as he did. Nor were a few sanctified through it before his death. His death, then, was not essential to give this truth a saving efficacy. It was indeed additional proof of the truth of his doctrines. But they had sufficient support, independent of this. The apostles therefore refer to his death, as an *offering for sin*, and not as a proof that his instructions are true.

But it is moreover said, that the death of Christ, and his consequent resurrection, was needful to confirm his doctrine of the resurrection of all men. Yet the man Christ Jesus, was not the first to teach this doctrine. It was believed by Abraham, Heb. 11 : 19 ; by the Pharisees, Acts 23 : 8 ; 24 : 15 ; and by Martha, John 11 : 24. And Christ spoke of it as an old and established truth, confirmed by the divine declaration, " I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." For he added, " God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." — Mat. 22 : 30-32.

What proof, then, was necessary to support this already established doctrine? And if more was needed, did he not furnish it by raising the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Nain, and Lazarus? And if more yet was needed, was it not furnished by the resurrection wrought by Elijah? — 1 Kings 17 : 22, by Peter, Acts 9 : 40, and by Paul, Acts 20 : 10.

It is true that the resurrection of Christ is proof of the resurrection of all men. And Paul so employed it with the Corinthians. But the doctrine is adequately established without it. Nor is this doctrine essential to salvation. Men may believe it, and still be lost; and others may disbelieve it, and yet be Christians. — 1 Cor. 15 : 11-17. The fact of Christ's resurrection is essential to our salvation, *only*, as he could not otherwise have become our Advocate with the Father, 1 John 2 : 1, nor have been exalted as a Prince and a Savior to grant repentance and remission of sins. — Acts 5 : 31. And it is on this account that he is

said to be "delivered" as a sacrifice "for our offences, and *raised* again for our *justification*." — Rom. 4 : 25.

Again, if Christ sustains no other relation to his people, than that of *teacher*, I see not why they are so often said to be "*in him*," as they *are* said to be, more than twenty times in the New Testament. It cannot mean that they abide in the doctrines and precepts of Christ, for that would rather be, to have him *in themselves*. And so indeed has Christ himself expressed it. He says, "Abide in me, and I in you. If ye abide in me, and *my words abide* in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." — John 15 : 4, 7. And in allusion to these words, John says, "Let that, therefore, abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning." That is, the words of Christ. "If that which ye have heard from the beginning, shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in *the Son* and in the Father." — 1 John 2 : 24. Evidently, to have *Christ in us*, or to have *his words abiding in us*, is to be sanctified.

For he says to his disciples, "Now ye are *clean* through the word which I have spoken unto you." — John 15 : 3. And he prays his Father to "*sanctify* them through the truth." — 17 : 17. What is it, then, to be *in Christ*, but to be *justified*? Who can those be, who are "dead in Christ" or "sleep in Jesus," and whose life is hid with Christ in God. — 1 Cor. 15 : 18 ; 1 Thess. 4 : 14, 16 ; Col. 3 : 3. Who can they be, but those who have been redeemed to God by the blood of his Son? Accordingly they are said to be both in Christ and in God. — 1 Thess. 1 : 1 ; 2 Thess. 1 : 1. Accordingly, also, the Son prays the Father for them, "that they be one in *us*." But if he sustains no relation to them, except that of a teacher, what propriety can there be in saying they are *in* him, in the same sense as they are in God?

Again, if Christ is only the teacher of his people, why, in more than a score of instances, do the apostles invoke his peace, mercy and grace upon them? "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." What grace has a mere

teacher to impart, especially, if, as some suppose, he is a mere man? Often the invocation is, "Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." And sometimes it is, "Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior."—Titus 1: 4. But how can a mere teacher bestow grace, mercy and peace? And what propriety in speaking of Christ as being equally a dispenser of peace and grace with God the Father, if he be only a teacher of truth?

Finally, if Christ is only their teacher, why are his people said so often to call upon him?—Acts 9: 14; Rom. 10: 12, 13; 1 Cor. 1: 2; 2 Tim. 2: 22. Why call on him more than any other teacher? And why should they be baptized in the name of Christ together with the Father and the Holy Ghost? Why not as properly be baptized in the name of Paul?

It is true, that Christ and his apostles taught the way of salvation more clearly than it was ever taught before; and that this entitles their

instructions to be called "the Gospel of the grace of God, which bringeth salvation." It is true, also, that we must be saved according to these instructions. But the essential glory of this Gospel, is that it teaches salvation by faith in the *vicarious death* and *atoning blood* of Christ, and justification by the blood-bought righteousness and redemption, and propitiation of Christ; all of which the apostle expresses in a single passage: "Being *justified* freely by his grace, through the *redemption* that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a *propitiation* through *faith in his blood*, to declare his *righteousness* for the *remission* of sins that are past." — Rom. 3: 24, 25. And whoever leaves out this momentous truth, "preaches another Gospel."

But there is another error against which we need to guard—an error which is often more of the heart than of the head. It is a reliance for salvation on *our own merits*. Men are naturally much inclined to self-justification. Even when convinced of their exposure to wrath for

their sins, they strive to escape from it by their own good works, nay, by abstaining from a few former transgressions. They often begin by partial and external reformations, and seem to think, that by leaving off a few of their greatest sins, they can make amends for the innumerable offences of past life. And finding this insufficient, they resolve on a more thorough reformation. Or on finding that abstinence from outward sins is not enough, they attempt the discharge of positive duties, such as reading the Bible, attending church, and perhaps secret prayer. The first aim of awakened sinners, is to do something by which they will *deserve* pardon and salvation. And even after they are rationally convinced of the impossibility of their doing so, their hearts still cling so much to this notion of justification by works, that they are in danger of still relying on them for eternal life. On this account, it is needful to make their insufficiency as evident and striking as possible.

A correct view of the *moral law*, will show

conclusively, that salvation by our own good works is utterly impossible. By this law, I mean our rule of duty to God and man, as taught, both by nature and by revelation. Concerning it, Paul says, "For as many as have sinned without [the revealed] law, shall also perish without law — for when the Gentiles which have not the [revealed] law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the [revealed] law, *are a law unto themselves*, which show the works of the law *written in their hearts*, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." — Rom. 2: 12, 14, 15. All the requirements of this law are summed up in the commandments to love God with *all* the heart, soul, and mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. — Matt. 22: 37-40. And these require our *entire* and *constant* obedience. Every moment of our lives are we required to do all we can for the glory of God and the good of man. If, then, we fail to do it at *one* time, we cannot make

amends at *another* time. As "cursed is every one that *continueth* not in *all* things which are written in the book of the law to do them." — Gal. 3: 10. A single instance of failure exposes us to final wrath. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." — Jas. 2: 10. That is, he as completely fails of salvation by the deeds of the law, as if he had broken every precept, although his punishment will be in proportion to the number and aggravations of his offences. We cannot make amends for the past, by "works of super-errogation," for while we would be making up for past defects, we need all our time for *present* duty. But even if we could do more service at any time, than we are bound to render, we have no proof that God would accept of it as a satisfaction for the past. Nor could we reasonably expect him to do so. As a citizen owes entire obedience to the laws of the State, no after act of obedience by him, can make amends for a previous act of theft, counterfeiting, perjury or murder. And

so with a subject of God's moral government. He owes ten thousand talents, and has nothing to pay. If saved at all, it must be by grace, and not by works. Let me further illustrate.

I am a tenant; I have rented a place for a year, for which I am to pay ten dollars per month, it being all I can earn over my other expenses. But for the first six months I have paid no rent, and have spent all my money for evil purposes. Yet I come to my landlord and promise to be punctual in paying the rent of the six months *remaining*, with the expectation that he will be satisfied, and at the end of the year will give me up my contract. Will he do so? No; at the end of the year I shall have paid him but sixty dollars, whereas I should have paid him one hundred and twenty. My punctuality for the last half of the year, will have made him no amends for the failure of the former half.

Again, I am an agent. Property has been put into my hands, a part of which I have wickedly squandered. I am accused, and confess; but I promise to make a full satisfaction.

And then I proceed to hand over to my creditor, the rest of the property with which he has entrusted me. "What!" he says, "do you mean to insult me by attempting to pay what you owe me, with what is already mine?" Yes, it is in just this insulting way that the self-righteous are hoping to appease the wrath of their offended God. And it is indeed strange, that any who understand the principles of law or of righteousness, should hope to be saved by works.

But the moral law of God is a *criminal code*, and punishes all sin, as the law of the land punishes all crime. Neither code will allow the offender to escape the punishment of past transgressions by future obedience. What would you think of a thief or robber who should insist that he ought to be saved from the penitentiary, because that, after plundering awhile the property of his neighbors, he at length abstained from doing so? And what would you think of a murderer who should insist that he ought to be saved from the gal-

lows, because that, after taking the lives of many, he had afterwards spared the lives of others? You would say they were most unreasonable and preposterous. Yet they are no more so than those are who hope to be saved from the punishment of past sins, by future obedience.

But we are not left to learn from inferences alone, the impossibility of salvation by our own merits. We are taught it by many a positive and direct declaration of God's holy word. Take the following from the apostle Paul: "And by him, [Christ,] all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." — Acts 13: 39. "By the deeds of the *law* there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin.* Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith *with-*

*The law mentioned in this and subsequent passages, is not the *ceremonial*, but the *moral* law; that law whose transgression is sin, 1 John 3: 4; and by which, therefore, is the knowledge of sin, Rom. 3: 20; that law which worketh wrath, and without which there is no transgression, 4: 15; none of which is true respecting the *ceremonial* law.

out the *deeds* of the law." — Rom. 3 : 20, 28. "Knowing that a man is not *justified* by the *works of the law*, but by the faith of Jesus Christ — for by the works of the law *shall no flesh be justified.*" — Gal. 2 : 16. "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse — but that *no man is justified by the law*, in the sight of God, is evident, 3 : 10, 11 ; "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that *not of yourselves* : it is the gift of God. *Not of works*, lest any man should boast." — Eph. 2 : 8, 9. "Who hath saved us — not according to *our works*," 2 Tim. 1 : 9 ; "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." — Titus 3 : 5. And the numerous passages which assert that the election, justification and salvation of saints are "*by grace*," are so many declarations that they are not saved by the deeds of the law. For says Paul again, "And if by grace, then it is no more of works ; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace ; otherwise, work is no more work."

— Rom. 11 : 6. In short, nothing is more positively and plainly taught in the Scriptures, than that sinners are not saved by their own works, but wholly by the forgiving grace of God, through the atoning blood of his Son. How woful are the prospects, then, of those who refuse to renounce their own righteousness, and to accept salvation through the righteousness of Christ !

My impenitent friends, I have been the more anxious to expose the foregoing errors, because they are the shoals on which many have made shipwreck, and on which you are in danger of doing the same. For while it is true that you must follow the example and instructions of Christ, and “be careful to maintain good works,” in order to be saved, yet, if you trust to these things alone, you will be lost forever. And while you must have a righteousness exceeding that of the Scribes and Pharisees, yet it must not be “*your own* righteousness, which is by the law,” but that of the Lord Jesus Christ. The work of *earning* your salvation,

and thus of *deserving* it, is what you cannot, need not do. Christ has done it for you. And if you will accept his righteousness as a substitute for your own, you can be saved. But if you refuse it, as you are so much inclined to do, you must be inevitably lost. And not only must you rely on the righteousness of Christ for justification before God, but you must rely upon it *wholly*. It is as unwise as it is unavailing, for you to try to recommend yourself to his favor by reformation, or by any religious performances, as if you would divide with Christ the work of your redemption. He will give no part of this glory to another. He must be "all in all," or nothing. You might as well neglect your salvation entirely, as to attempt to do *a part* of it, and then depend on him to make up your deficiency. He will do the *whole* work or *none* of it. Nothing is more displeasing to God than to have you urge your own righteousness upon him, either in whole or in part, after he has so often and positively declared, that he will not accept it.

Let us all beware how we rely in any degree upon our own merits for eternal life. Let us look only to Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth; for neither is there salvation in any other: while "redemption through his blood" is a "plenteous redemption." And it is only by relying on this, that the sinner can "believe to *the saving of the soul.*"

SERMON VII.

THE NATURE OF REPENTANCE.

“For Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” — 2 Cor. 7 : 10.

The subject of repentance is one of vast importance. And it demands the more attention, because of the diverse opinions, and of the many confused and loose notions which are taught respecting it. It is to be feared that many, by wrong notions of it, are lost forever; and that others, by their obscure and indefinite views of it, are very much hindered and delayed, in

entering the way of salvation. Nay, it is much to be feared, that many a Gospel minister has not that clear and correct, that distinct and simple view of the subject which he needs, in order to direct the inquiring sinner most easily and most successfully into the gate of life. By confounding the single element of repentance with other things, he needlessly confuses and perplexes the mind of those who are asking the way to Zion. And if any doubt this, he is requested to give the more earnest attention to what follows. For one object of this discourse is, to point out what *I* regard as some of the common and pernicious errors on this subject. And while I would earnestly entreat the Lord to keep me from teaching what is wrong respecting it, I would humbly ask of others a candid, close attention. I ask it, both of those who profess to teach, and of those who need to be taught the right way of the Lord. I proceed now to consider,

The Nature of "repentance to salvation."

The definition of repentance usually given

is, "sorrow for sin." And many are led by it to conclude that, as they have some compunction and fear, on account of their transgressions, they have all the repentance that is necessary to salvation: whereas, they have only that "sorrow of the world," which, as the text teaches us, "worketh death." They have only that kind of distress which the convicted murderer feels when he would readily repeat his crime, if, by taking the life of his jailor, he could escape from prison and from death: the same, too, that the lost will forever feel, in the world of woe.

To guard against this danger, many theologians distinguish repentance into legal and evangelical: "Legal repentance flows," they say, "from a sense of danger and a fear of wrath; and produces but partial external reformation; and continues for a short season: whereas, evangelical repentance is true sorrow for sin, and a desire to get rid of it; and eventuates in a change of heart and life." The former they would call "the sorrow of the

world," and the latter, the "godly sorrow" mentioned in the text. But with all due respect for these theologians, I must think their distinction is insufficient. And the difference they would express is better ascertained by considering the different meaning of the two Greek words translated "*repentance.*"

Those who insist that evangelical repentance is godly sorrow for sin, are relying on our text for proof. But it proves the very contrary. It proves, that the two, (sorrow and repentance,) are as distinct as cause and effect; for the one produces the other. "Godly sorrow *worketh* repentance." It would be just as correct to insist that "*death*" is the same thing as "the sorrow of the world;" for in the latter clause of the text it is said, "the sorrow of the world *worketh* death." The same verb is used also in the next verse. "For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought [worked] in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what vehement desire,

yea what zeal, yea what revenge." Does this passage prove that "sorrow after a godly sort" is identical with *carefulness, indignation, fear, vehement desire* and *revenge*? Certainly it does, if the text proves that "godly sorrow" is the same as "repentance to salvation." By saying, in the text, that "godly sorrow worketh repentance," Paul evidently intended to teach, that such sorrow *occasions* or *leads to* it. Just as he said, Rom. 2: 4, "the goodness of God *leadeth* thee to repentance." And does a thing *occasion*, or *lead to* itself? I once held the notion myself, that evangelical repentance was godly sorrow for sin. But it now seems strange to me, that I could thus have confounded those things which are so palpably distinct.*

* Bloomfield tells us, that the word which in the text is translated "worketh," signifies to work out, to effect, produce, be the cause or author of, and is used in Rom. 4: 15: "The law worketh wrath." Are the law, and the wrath of God the same? Also, 5: 3, 4: "Tribulation worketh patience—experience—hope." Do all these words mean the same thing? He says, the same word means "to work, perform, practice, do," as in Rom. 2: 9: "Every soul of man that doeth evil." Is the soul of man the same as his evil deeds? And again, he says it means "to exhibit or manifest," as in 2 Cor. 12: 12: "The signs of an apostle were wrought among you." Were these signs the

There are, in the Greek original, two words, with their derivations and variations, which our translators have rendered *repent*, *repented*, and *repentance*. One of them is μεταμελομαι, metamelomai. It is from a compound of μετα meta, with, and the impersonal verb μελεῖ, meleī, to care for, or to be troubled or anxious about. The compound expresses regret, or grief, sorrow or remorse, *about one's own conduct*.* And I shall attempt to show that this word is never used to signify that repentance which is unto life. I can find only seven or eight instances in which it is used. They are the following :

Mat. 21 : 29, 32. In the parable of the two sons, who were told of their father, "go work to-day in my vineyard," it is said, the first re-

same as those who wrought them? Finally, he says it means "to form one for a purpose, to create," as in 2 Cor. 5 : 5 : "Now he that wrought us for the self-same thing is God." Is the "new man" the same as he who made him such?

* Μεταμελομαι is analogous with συνειδω. Their prefixes, μετα and συν both signify *with*. And when in composition with their verbs, they signify *within one's self*. Συνειδω signifies to be conscious of; that is, to *know within one's self*. (And hence συνειδεις, the conscience.) So μεταμελομαι signifies to be *troubled within one's self*; that is, about one's own evil thoughts and actions.

plied, "I will not; but afterwards he *repented* and went." Then in applying this parable by way of reproof to the chief priests, Christ said, "And ye, when ye had seen it, repented not, that ye might believe in him."

The repentance of the son was evidently a mere self-reproach or remorse, for not having obeyed the reasonable command of his father. And at most, it could not have been that repentance which secures eternal salvation. So also, of the repentance mentioned in the second place. It is spoken of as connected with faith, but not with *saving* faith; for as we saw in a foregoing discourse, "to believe to the saving of the soul, is to believe *in the Lord Jesus Christ.*" But here the object of faith is John the Baptist. And in the original, the preposition $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ "in" of our translation is wanting. As, then, this faith is not *saving*, so neither can the repentance connected with it, be saving.

Mat. 27 : 3, "Then Judas, when he saw that he [Christ] was condemned, *repented* himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver

to the chief priests and elders." If Judas had had a "repentance to salvation," he would have gone not to the priests and elders, for he had done them no wrong; but to Pilate, to entreat for the life of the Holy One whom he had betrayed. Nor would he have gone out and hanged himself, v. 5. For suicide is not the fruit of "repentance to salvation," nor of godly sorrow. No; it is "the sorrow of the world that worketh death." Neither would the other apostles have said, "he went to his own place." — Acts 1: 25. If his had been a "repentance unto life," "his own place" would have still been among the apostles, and right by the side of him who denied his Master, but afterwards "went out and wept bitterly."

Rom. 11: 29, "For the gifts and calling of God are without *repentance*." This passage does not teach, as many suppose, that God grants eternal life to men before they exercise a "repentance to salvation," but, that whenever he does grant the blessing, he never *regrets*, and therefore never recalls it. And as the

destitution of this repentance is affirmed of God, and not of *man*, it cannot be that which is necessary to eternal salvation.

2 Cor. 7 : 8, " For though I made you sorry by a letter, I do not *repent*, though I did *repent*." It is most manifest, that the repentance of which Paul here speaks, is not that which secures eternal life. For the context shows he only meant to say, that when he found how much grief his letter occasioned the Corinthians, he regretted, and perhaps blamed himself for having written it; but that when he afterwards found how much good this same letter had done them, he ceased to be grieved for having written it. Surely, no one will say, that Paul exercised a "repentance to salvation" on account of a certain letter which he had written, a repentance which he had no reason to exercise.

Heb. 7 : 21, " The Lord sware, and will not *repent*. Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedek." All that is intended by this language is evidently this: that God will

never be sorry or grieved, that he has made his Son the High Priest of his people. And surely God does not exercise that repentance which secures the remission of sins. Rather, if he did in this case repent, it would eventuate in the final condemnation of all those to whom the priesthood of Christ pertains.

Yet another instance is found in the text. "Repentance to salvation, not to be *repented* of." The repentance mentioned at the commencement of this passage is indeed a saving grace. But this word, in the original, is very different, both in its etymology and meaning, from that which at the close of the passage is translated, "repented of." This latter word, like those seven instances before quoted, is derived from *μεταμελομαι* *metamelomai*; and cannot be a "repentance to salvation." If it did occur, it must rather prove a repentance to damnation. And it is to be regretted, that words so different in their origin and signification had not been expressed by different words, in our translation. For in this passage, the apostle

intended simply to say, that this repentance of the Corinthians was not to be lamented — that neither he nor they should regret it.

These eight instances are all that I can find in the New Testament, where μεταμελομαι *metamelomai* is translated *repent*. But the other verb, μετανοω, *metanoeo*, and its noun, μετανοια, *metanoia*, are found in more than eighty instances. It will be seen, that though this verb is somewhat similar to the other in structure and meaning, (having the same prefix, μετα, *meta*, and having respect to one's own conduct,) yet, that in other respects they are widely different. Μεταμελομαι simply expresses pain in respect to our *past* conduct, while μετανοω has respect both to our *past* and *future* conduct. But they are more widely distinguished, in that the latter is often urged as a *commanded duty*, as a *prerequisite to salvation*, and as that which is invariably *connected with reformation*; while the former is *never* so employed.

1. Those instances in which repentance is mentioned as a *commanded duty*, are found in

the following passages: Mat. 3: 2; 11: 20, 21; Mark 1: 15; 6: 12; Acts 8: 22; 13: 24; 19: 4; [Compare the last two passages with Mat. 3: 2;] Acts 17: 30; Rom. 2: 4, 5; [This is an indirect command, being a reproof for neglecting repentance.] Rev. 2: 5, 16; 3: 3, 19. In these passages it is mentioned sixteen times.

2. Those instances in which repentance is spoken of as necessary to pardon, and thus to salvation, are found in the following passages: Mat. 9: 13; Mark 2: 17; and Luke 5: 32. [Compare with Luke 19: 10;] Mat. 11: 20, 21; Luke 10: 13; 11: 32; Mark 1: 4; Luke 3: 3; 13: 3, 5; 15: 7, 10; 16: 30; 17: 3, 4; 24: 47; Acts 2: 38; 3: 19; 5: 31; 11: 18; 20: 21; 2 Cor. 7: 9, 10; 2 Peter 3: 9; Rev. 2: 5, 16, 21, 22; 3: 3. In these passages it is mentioned thirty one times.

3. Those instances in which repentance is mentioned as inseparable from reformation, are found in the following passages: In Mat. 12: 41; it is said "The men of Nineveh *repented* at the preaching of Jonah." And from Jonah 3:

10, we learn that this repentance made them "turn from their evil way." So the repentance mentioned in 2 Cor. 7: 9, 10, wrought the reformation mentioned in the next verse. And when in 2 Cor. 12: 21, Paul said, "I shall bewail many who have sinned already, and have not *repented* of the uncleanness and fornication, and lasciviousness which they have committed," he evidently intimates that the want of reformation among the Corinthians would be evidence of their want of repentance. And when he said in 2 Tim. 2: 25, "If God peradventure will give them *repentance* to the *acknowledging of the truth*," he evidently means that *practical* acknowledgment of it, which involves reformation. So, when in Heb. 6: 1, he speaks of *repentance from* dead works, he must mean that which leads away from works deserving death. And when in verse 6 he says it is impossible "if these shall fall away, to *renew* them *again to repentance*," he evidently speaks of a repentance that would eventuate in the restoration of these fallen ones to their former state.

In Heb. 12: 17, it is said of Esau, that "he found no place of *repentance*, though he sought it carefully with tears." Yet he did not seek this repentance in himself, as many suppose, but in his father. He sought to have Isaac change his purpose, and thus pronounce on him the blessing which he had previously pronounced upon his brother Jacob. But this could not be done. For though Isaac had conferred this blessing on Jacob by *mistake*, he knew (probably by a new afflatus of the Spirit) that he had done it according to the purpose of God, and that therefore it could not be altered. Esau thought his father had done wrong, and therefore sought in him, that repentance by which he would correct his error. In Rev. 9: 20, 21; and 16: 9, 11, we are taught that the reason why certain sinners did not forsake their wicked works, but continued to worship devils and to blaspheme God, and why they failed to give him glory was, that they did not *repent*. If then they had repented, they would in all these respects have truly reformed. Thus

repentance is mentioned twelve times, as inseparable from reformation.

Beside these, there are three passages in which the same word is used, where repentance is both enjoined as a duty, and virtually declared to result in reformation. Mat. 3: 8, "Bring forth, therefore, fruit *meet for repentance*." Luke 3: 8, "Bring forth, therefore, fruit *worthy of repentance*." And Acts 26: 19, 20, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but showed, that they should repent, and turn to God, and do *works meet for repentance*." These fruits meet for, or worthy of repentance, as enjoined by John the Baptist, are evidently the same as the "*works meet for repentance*" which the apostle Paul enjoined. They are the good works of holy obedience, which *become*, and *befit*, and which *belong to* repentance. Genuine Gospel repentance will, then, be invariably followed by thorough reformation.

Thus we find, that the words repent, repented, repentance and impenitent, are used in the New Testament but in seventy-one instances, in

sixty-one of which they are translated from $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\nu\theta\epsilon\omega$, metaneo, and in all such cases they designate a *Christian grace* which is at once a *commanded duty*, a *condition of salvation*, and that which is invariably followed *by reformation* of heart and of life. Whereas they are translated but in eight instances from $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\mu\epsilon\lambda\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$, metamelomai, and in no one of these do they designate any one of these things.

It is evident from the foregoing investigation, that the repentance required in the Gospel, is altogether different from that *penance* which is taught by Papists. For both the etymology of the words translated "repentance," and the connection in which they are used, plainly show that they are intended to express an *internal exercise*. Whereas, the *penance* of the Papists consists mainly in *external action*.*

* Papists tell us, "that penance consists in contrition for sins, the confession of them to the priest, and satisfaction." The latter two are external acts. But satisfaction is that to which the name of penance is principally applied. And this is declared by Dens, a Catholic author, to be "the voluntary endurance of punishment, as a compensation for an injury offered to God." This punishment is appointed by a priest, and may consist of devotions, prayers, fastings, alms, and other austerities, at given times and to given amounts.

metamelomai comes nearest in signification to their *penance*, since its chief element is *distress*. And yet these are very different; for the one is distress only internal, and the other is mainly external. The one is grief, regret, remorse; while the other includes some suffering, self-inflicted on the body or the outward estate. Besides, as we have seen, this so called repentance is not enjoined in the Gospel, nor is it named as a condition of salvation. It is true that fasting is sometimes enjoined; but that should not be called a *penance*, for it is not required for the purpose of making satisfaction for past sins, but for the purpose of promoting humility, in order to render our prayers more acceptable and prevailing.

We have seen, moreover, that the only repentance which is commanded as a saving grace is translated from $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\nu\omicron\iota\alpha$, metanoia; and that this is still farther in its meaning from that of *penance*. It has no necessary connection

The above author gives many specimens of tasks and sufferings which the priest may impose on his penitents, as a satisfaction for their sins.

with distress or affliction. The root of the word is νοος or νους, noos or nous, meaning the *mind*. And its simple signification is a *change of mind*, or of *purpose*. It is, then, entirely distinct from external action, although like all other purposes, it leads to corresponding conduct.

It was probably by confounding these words, μεταμελομαι *metamelomai* and μετανοέω, *metanoeo* that Papists were led to think they signify *penance*, for they joined the distress of the former, with the *promise* of the latter, and thence insisted that self-inflicted distress is necessary to secure salvation.

Besides, the repentance of the Gospel is the exercise of a *moment*, while Romish penance is a *protracted* action, such as prayer or fasting for a *given time*, walking on the hands and knees a *given distance*, and the like austerities. Nor can we believe, that when Peter said to the multitude, on the day of pentecost, "Repent and be baptized, for the remission of sins," he meant they should do the prolonged work of

penance; for three thousand of them were received into the Church on that same day. And indeed, if we were to substitute penance in the place of repentance, we should render several passages of Scripture incoherent and unmeaning. For, as according to the Papists, to do penance is to endure self-inflicted suffering, Acts 20: 21 would read, "self-infliction toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ;" Heb. 6: 4, 6, would read, "For it is impossible to renew them again to *self-infliction*;" and 12: 17, "He found no place to afflict himself, though he sought it carefully, with tears." And the same rendering would make self-torture the gift of God, as in Acts 5: 31; 11: 18, and 2 Tim. 2: 25.

Μεταμελομαι, *metamelomai*, as it seems to me, had better been rendered to *grieve* or to *regret*, including remorse, or self-condemnation for having acted unwisely or wickedly. But as to μετανοέω, *metanoëo*, I can think of no word which would *now* express its meaning, better than that into which it has been already rendered,

that is, "repent." The *primitive* meaning of this English word may not be what we call "evangelical repentance." But words pass from primitive to technical or conventional significations, such as *candidate*, *humility*, *sincerity*, *virtue*, with many others. And thus have both $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\nu\omicron\sigma\omega$ metanoeo and repent passed from their original to a precise theological meaning. It was "the mind of the Spirit," as I think, to fix on the former in the New Testament, the signification of "repentance to salvation." For as we have seen, when such a repentance is mentioned in the original, this word, in some of its variations, is the only one which is used to express it. It should, therefore, be translated into that English word, repent, to which we usually attach the like meaning; while *metamelomai* should have been rendered by some other word.

Dr. George Campbell and others, insisted that what is rendered *repent* and *repentance* in our version, should be translated *reform* and *reformation*. "Reform, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Godly sorrow worketh

reformation to salvation." And they seem to think that this opinion is supported by those passages in which reformation is spoken of, as the invariable result of repentance. But such passages prove the very contrary, for they speak of reformation as something additional and subsequent to repentance: "Repent, *and* be converted;" "Repent *and* turn to God." And a thing cannot be added to itself; nor can it be contended that *kai*, (and) in these passages, means *even*, or *that is*, as it does in some cases. "Repent, *that is*, be converted." Repent, *that is*, turn to God, do works meet for repentance. Besides, to "be converted, to turn to God, and to do works meet for repentance," is to *reform*. And reformation cannot be meet for, fitting or suitable to *itself*. Again, as we have before seen, the "works meet for repentance" which Paul enjoins, are the same as the "fruit, meet for or worthy of repentance," which John Baptist enjoined. But the fitting fruits of a thing, are its proper results, and are those things by which its nature or character is

known. For, said Christ, "The tree is known by its fruit." And "fruit meet for repentance" must be such *after* conduct as it should produce. What can it be, then, but amendment of life? But as the fruit of a tree cannot be the tree itself, so the fruit of reformation cannot be reformation itself. To repent, then, and to reform, are not the same. The one is a simple, internal exercise, while the other is manifold and external in its manifestations.

I prefer to call repentance a *resolution to reform*, and reformation itself *the carrying out* of this resolve. "Repentance unto life" is the *full purpose, the fixed and final determination* of the soul to forsake satan as a master, and the world as a portion; and to take God as a Master, and heaven as a portion, and to do it for time and for eternity. The repenting sinner looks at *sin* and *holiness* in the abstract, and then resolves, without reserve, wholly to forsake the former and to cleave wholly to the latter. But though I believe that "repentance unto life" consists in this simple purpose, to lead a new

life, I must not be understood to deny that regeneration and godly sorrow, either precede or accompany it. I only deny that they are one and the same thing.

The above, I think, is both a probable and Scriptural definition. It comports, so to speak, with the genius of the Gospel. As faith, which is one condition of salvation, is a simple, instantaneous exercise, it seems proper that repentance, which is the other condition of salvation, should also be simple and instantaneous. And it needs to be so, in order to be adapted to the exigent necessities of the sinner: necessities to which the Gospel seems in all other respects to be adapted. Sinners are often in circumstances where they must comply with the terms of salvation *in a moment*, or be lost. And if the preaching of Christ had been, "Except ye reform, ye shall all likewise perish," how could the thief on the cross have been saved? What time had he for that reformation which includes a reconstruction of his habits? And how can believers in the Lord Jesus Christ be saved, if *they have no time to repent.*

We have seen that the word translated "repentance" signifies a *change of mind*. As, then, it is a *mental* change, it must be one of *opinions* or of *purposes*. And as it is one that directly and decidedly affects the conduct, it is a change in the *latter*: a change from the former purpose of living on in sin, to a purpose, a full, a fixed and final determination to forsake sin, and to lead, henceforth, a holy life.

This definition of "repentance" is evidently one of great importance. For it makes the subject more simple; and clears away much of the mist by which, in the sinner's mind, it is too often surrounded. It presents repentance as one simple exercise of mind, and not as a mixed multitude of external actions. It presents it as the final choice between the treasures of earth and the treasures of heaven; and between a life of sin and a life of holiness. It is, then, a simple, instantaneous act of the mind, which can be the more easily ascertained. Whereas, if we consider it as consisting in reformation, we raise the perplexing questions:

How thorough must it be? and, How long must it continue, before we shall be entitled to salvation? — questions not easily answered. But, if repentance is a *resolution*, a determined *purpose* to reform, the question of our title to life can be answered far more easily.

This resolution must, however, be in several respects perfect. It must have the full consent of the will, and reach to all our conduct. It need not be highly emotional. Enough that it is perfectly deliberate and decided. To repent truly, we must determine, without reluctance and without reserve, that we will strive faithfully for life, to forsake *all* sins, and do *every* duty for *life* and *forever*. I say this the more particularly, because many awakened sinners resolve to leave *some* of their sins and to do *some* of their duties, which is by no means a “repentance unto life.” Yet it is not to be expected, that this purpose, though ever so perfect, will at all times be completely fulfilled; for the best of saints are imperfect, so that if a complete fulfillment were essential to salva-

tion, none would be saved. But if our purpose of reformation be *genuine*, it will be *perpetual*. We shall not abandon it because we fail in some cases to fulfill it. While lamenting our failures, we shall still be resolved to battle with our temptations and corruptions, till we get a final "victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." For though I say *repentance is instantaneous*, I do not mean that it instantly ceases, but that one moment's exercise of it secures salvation. God will see at once, whether our purpose of amendment is thorough and sincere. And if he sees it such, he will not wait to find whether we fulfill it. But taking, so to speak, "the will for the deed," he will grant us forgiveness at once, and ever after will afford us that sustaining and sanctifying grace by which we shall be "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." And if we can see, that notwithstanding our many failures, our purpose of reformation is still abiding — that still we are anxiously striving to live a holy life, we may know that ours is a "repentance

to salvation." It is true, that many who thought they had resolved to forsake their sins, have "drawn back unto perdition." But such deceived themselves with only a half-way resolution. If they had come to the deliberate, unreserved, full-hearted determination which has now been described, they would have adhered to it through life. The best proof of "repentance unto life," is *perseverance*.

If the view now taken be a correct one, it should certainly be adopted by all whose business it is to lead mankind into the way of life, as it would aid them to do their work with greater ease and success. For their hearers could more easily understand, and more safely follow their instructions. This *purpose* of a radical and entire reformation, though a comprehensive, is yet a very simple one. And it is much easier to contemplate a single *resolution* to leave a life of sin for a life of religion, than to scan the nature, and measure the extent of "godly sorrow," or to investigate the manifold and multiform items of reformation. And sin-

ners would be much more likely to "enter in at the strait gate," if they saw it distinctly, and knew they could enter it by a single bound, than they would, if it were covered with a cloud, and they did not know how far, and in what direction they must move to enter it.

The Lord grant that all my readers may find and follow the "narrow way which leadeth unto life."

SERMON VIII.

AUTHOR AND OBLIGATIONS OF REPENTANCE.

"Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation."—2 Cor. 7 : 10.

In a former discourse from these words, we endeavored to ascertain the nature of genuine, evangelical repentance. And in doing so, we had occasion to consider it as an *oft-commanded duty*, as *necessary to pardon and salvation*, and as *inseparably connected* with a thorough internal and external *reformation*. But these topics will need to be considered much more at large. And it is proposed to investigate the first of

them in the present discourse. Our subject will be

The author and obligation of "repentance unto life."

I undertake to show, that all are bound to exercise this repentance without delay. But here I shall be met at once with the frequent objection, that God is the great efficient author of this exercise—that man in himself has no ability to *repent*, therefore he cannot be bound to do so, till God comes and confers the needed power upon him. It is important, then, to remove this objection, before proceeding to the positive proofs of the obligation.

It will not only be conceded, but strenuously maintained, that God is the efficient agent of repentance. For this truth is evidently and frequently taught in his Holy Word. A few passages, however, will suffice to establish the point. When the high priest reproved the disciples for preaching Christ, "Peter and the other apostles answered and said,—the God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and

hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior for to *give repentance* to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." — Acts 5 : 29, 31. And when the disciples heard what Peter related to them concerning the conversion of Cornelius and his company, "they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, then hath God also to the Gentiles *granted repentance* unto life." — 11 : 18. And Paul said to Timothy, "If God peradventure will *give* them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." — 2 Tim. 2 : 25. In these passages, God, the Father and the Son, are said to be the author of repentance, as they *give* and *grant* it. Yet it results more immediately from the influence of God, the Holy Spirit.

But let it not be supposed that because it results from *divine* agency, it has no connection with *human* agency. Especially let it not be supposed, that because it depends in *one* sense on the *will of God*, it can depend in *no* sense on the *will of man*. For, if we consider the revealed *mode* of *divine* agency on *voluntary*

and *moral* beings, we shall be led to a different conclusion. Let it not be thought that when God gives the sinner repentance, its exercise is involuntary, or that it is a kind of creature which he makes and puts into man's heart to be active there—just as a watch-maker constructs what he calls the movement of a watch, and puts it into a case to run therein; and that, therefore, the sinner must wait till God sees fit in his sovereignty to come and put repentance into him, as it were, by some mechanical process and power.

In producing repentance, "God worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Phil. 2: 13. He does not suspend our volition in the work, nor act irrespective of it. He acts *upon* it. The work to be done, is to bring man to *will* aright and thus to act aright. And in accomplishing this, two influences are brought to bear upon his volition. One is the instrumental agency of the truth, and the other is the effectual agency of the Spirit. The object of these combined agencies, is to bring

the sinner deliberately and voluntarily to resolve that he will forsake the way of sin, and walk in the way of holy obedience; that is, to repent. It is to bring him to resolve freely in his own mind, that he will wholly reform in heart and conduct. And in coming to such a resolution, he is as deliberate and voluntary as in any other act of his life.

Repentance, then, is the result of *persuasion* and not of *force*. That it does result from persuasion, we are taught by Christ in his parable of the rich man and Lazarus, in which he represents Dives as calling upon Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his five brethren against coming to his place of torment, insisting that "if one went unto them from the dead, they *would repent*:" to which Abraham replies, "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded [that is to repent] though one rose from the dead."—Luke 16: 31.

God employs various means besides arguments for persuading men to repent. One is

his judgments. Said the prophet, "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." — Isa. 26 : 9. That is, they will be persuaded, in the language of Daniel, "to break off their sins by righteousness," and that is to repent. Again the apostle says, that when God afflicts us, he does it "for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness." — Heb. 12 : 10. And all such sanctification involves repentance. Another means is the bestowment of divine blessings. For, said the same apostle, "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." — Rom. 2 : 4. Once, too, God employed miracles for this purpose. Christ, therefore, "upbraided the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not," Mat. 11 : 20, thus teaching that such miracles should have persuaded them to repentance. But his most frequent means are his *commands*, with their attendant warnings and promises. I shall not quote them here, as I shall have occasion to mention them in another connection ; and I

would only say in respect to them, that these commands are often followed up by the most cogent urgency of motives, all of which would be utterly out of place, if as respects repentance man were a mere machine.

But all these means are of themselves unavailing. The same prophet who said, that when God's "judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness," said on another occasion, "Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more." — Isa. 1: 5. That is, your chastisement will only make you worse. Paul tells us that though the goodness of God *should* lead the sinner to repentance, yet "in the impenitency and hardness of his heart," he still "treasures up to himself wrath against the day of wrath." — Rom. 2: 5. And Christ virtually declared, that where most of his miracles were wrought, there men failed to repent. — Mat. 11: 20, 21. So it often eventuates, also, in regard to all the other persuasives. But how? Not by want of ability on the part of the sinner, nor by want

of power in the means employed. The prophet spoke as if God's judgment *should* persuade the wicked to resolve on leaving their sins; and the apostle, as if his goodness *should* lead them to repentance. And surely they must be able to do all that they ought to do. Nor would Christ have upbraided those who saw his mighty works for not repenting, if their repentance were impossible. The failure in all such cases then, is owing to the want of *disposition* and not of power.

How, then, are these means of persuasion made effectual? Evidently by the accompanying influences of the Spirit of God. But in what way the Spirit operates in effecting repentance, we cannot fully understand. We know, however, that it is in such a way as makes the means successful. I mean, that when a man is persuaded to do a certain thing, it is always out of regard to some supposed truth. The means of repentance, is the truth variously presented to the mind for the purpose of operating *through* the *understanding* on the

heart — *truth* derived either from revelation or from the works and providence of God — *truth* brought to the mind by reading, hearing or reflection. This truth is, as Christ tells us, (John 17: 17,) the word of God, by which men are sanctified; and is that word of God which as Paul tells us, (Eph. 6: 17,) is the sword of the Spirit. Wherefore, as Peter tells us, we are to “*purify* our souls” (a work involving repentance) “by obeying the *truth* through the Spirit.” — 1 Peter 1: 22. And when the Spirit plies our hearts, all we are conscious of, is the pressure of truth upon our minds — just as a man who is pierced by a sword feels only the weapon and not the hand that is thrusting it. Nor can I see why we are not just as free in yielding to the truth, when pressed by the Spirit, as when presented by a human agent.

In order to be effectual, moral suasion needs only to be powerful enough to overcome the reluctance of the *will*. And when the will yields to the convictions of the understanding, does it not yield *willingly*? Does not the

Spirit overcome this reluctance of the will by making the truth *in some way*, however inexplicable, yet *somehow*, perfectly convincing? And can we conceive of man's coming to a full resolution to return to God without a complete conviction, that it is both his duty, and in all respects best for him to do so, although it is contrary to his present inclinations? And is he not just as free under the pressure of a perfectly convincing argument, as when under one of less power? In other words, does perfect persuasion destroy free agency? Can any Christian call to recollection the consciousness, that, at the moment of repentance, his "will was either forced, or by any absolute necessity, determined to good." And if our present view of the Spirit's influence be correct, we see that in "working in us to *will* and to do of his good pleasure," Phil. 2: 13, God does not set our wills aside, much less oppose them; but works *on* them and through them, somewhat as man works on the will of his fellow man. Nor can I see why God may not accomplish all

his purposes with moral beings in this very way.

But suppose it be said, the power of the Spirit is exerted at the *point*, as well as at the hilt of the sword. Suppose it be thought, the Spirit goes in advance of the word, and prepares the heart to be effectually persuaded by the truth. And I will not object to the supposition. Yet it strikes me that the Spirit must make some use of the truth, even in effecting this preparation of the heart for the final and successful reception of the truth. Just as he who addresses an audience endeavors, at the beginning, to awake the attention, and to conciliate the favor of those whom he is about to address.* So, the prodigal was prepared, by a previous consideration of his wretchedness, to look back to his father's house, and thus to be persuaded to the resolution, "I will arise and

* In my attempts, in this discourse, to illustrate *divine* by *human* agency, let me not be thought to insist, that the one is a facsimile of the other. God's ways are so far above man's ways, that we cannot find out the Almighty to perfection. And all I would attempt in these illustrations is an *approximate*, not an exact and complete explanation of the methods of divine agency in these cases.

go to my father:" which resolution represents "repentance unto life."* In this preparation of the mind, the Spirit gives no new capacity or power; nor any increase of those already possessed; for none are needed. The sinner *could* be, and always *would* be rightly influenced by the truth, if he were rightly disposed. It is said, "This *IF* is a mighty one." And it is so. But this want of disposition argues no want of natural ability. And all the Spirit can be supposed to do in giving repentance, is to promote a right disposition or "*heart* to it," as Solomon expresses it. And in doing so, there is no interference with man's free agency. This influence of the Spirit, is a *help* rather than a hindrance. It aids us to resolve, just as we *ought* to resolve without such aid. It comes to our assistance, not because we are *weak* and *cannot* repent, but because we are *wicked* and

* Some seem to think, that if God did not sometimes act on the human mind in the *absence of truth*, or at least aside from it, he could not be truly a sovereign God. But I could never see the thing in such a light. I see not why he could not effect all his sovereign purposes as well by *finite means*, as upon man, a *finite subject*. Yet this is a deep which I do not profess to fathom to perfection.

will not repent. Surely, then, we should not complain, that such aid is afforded us.

Yet, with many, the doctrine of divine assistance is a very unwelcome one. Many oppose it, because, as they think, it makes them out to be incapable of resolving aright. They say, we are able of ourselves, and need no help. To such, I would say: I know you are able, in such a sense that you are utterly without excuse for not repenting. And as you *can* repent without the Spirit's aid, why not do so, and thereby *show* that you do not need this aid? But, while left to yourselves, you *will not* repent. Every body sees you do not. You are conscious that you do not; and also, that the only reason why you delay to repent, is, not that you *cannot*, but simply because you freely choose to continue in sin. And by acting thus, you show that you do *in one sense*, need the aid of the Spirit, not to *enable* but to *dispose* you to repent. And will you first *create* the necessity, and then complain that efforts are made to relieve it?

Suppose a man is the owner of a large plantation on the Mississippi river. The water is rising rapidly, and threatens to sweep away his crops and stock, himself and his family. And suppose he has a levee or embankment around it which is nearly completed, and which, if finished, would effectually keep out the water, and another day's work upon it would save his all. But either he is so lazy or reckless, or so fond of sport and pleasure, that he neglects to complete his levee, notwithstanding the entreaties of his wife and family. At length a very influential friend comes in, warns him of his danger, and entreats him to finish his levee, nay, offers to assist him, and taking him by the arm, leads him to the spot. At length he consents; and who could resist such urgencies as these? The levee is soon completed, the man and his all are saved. What now should he say to the friend who so kindly interfered? Should he say, "Sir, you have been very officious. Did you not know that I was able to do this work without your intermeddling?" Should

he not *rather* say, "if it had not been for your aid and urgency, my all would have been lost; and I am under the greatest obligation to you, from the fact that I *might* and ought to have done this work without you?"

But our main business at present is not with those who deny and oppose the doctrine of divine agency in man's repentance, but with those who plead this agency as an excuse for remaining in impenitence. Many there are, who insist that they cannot take one step in the way to life everlasting, till the Spirit effectually moves them. And yet we have seen that they are voluntary and competent agents, who could repent without the Spirit's influence *if they were willing*; and that all the Spirit could do for them, would be effectually to persuade them to do what they might and should do without such influence. They must be conscious that they are free in choosing sin, and therefore could choose the opposite. If we consider the operations of a man's mind at the time of his repenting, we shall see that he

acts as freely in this as in any other concern. He is conscious of no influence on his mind but that of the truth, though the Spirit be most powerfully plying it at the very time. He thinks on his ways as the Psalmist did, and turns his feet to God's testimonies. — Ps. 119 : 59. He reflects and deliberates as the prodigal son did, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger." And then he resolves, "I will arise and go to my father." — Luke 15 : 18. He looks at things just as they are, and yet just as he *might* have seen them before. He reasons correctly respecting them, just as he might have reasoned before. Then he comes to the deliberate conclusion that it is best for him to turn from the wrong to the right way; and therefore resolves to do so. Nor does he in all this call into operation any powers which he did not possess before.

It is often insisted that the sinner must always choose, and act in accordance with his *permanent affections* and *inclinations*; and that

these must be changed before he can choose the way of life. But though we should admit this assumption, it would not follow that this preparatory change of the affections must be wrought without the instrumentality of the truth, and without respect to the sinner's volition. Is there any way to reach his heart, but through his understanding? Has he any affections of a moral character that are not prompted by *thought*? Can he love or hate, like or dislike any thing without some idea of its nature? And if not, how can his affections be *changed* in the absence of the truth? Again, if these affections have no connection with thought, how can they have any *moral character*? And how can affections that have no moral character themselves, decide the moral character of our volitions and resolutions? Does a blind impulse determine a man to "repentance unto life?" And though men *do* choose and act invariably, according to their permanently prevailing inclinations, this does not prove that they *cannot* do otherwise. Are

not their understanding given them as a guide to feeling and conduct? Can they not follow the dictates of reason and conscience in opposition to their hitherto prevailing appetites and passions? If not, how is it possible to practice the commanded duty of self-denial? Who has stronger evil propensities, than the drunkard? Yet however far gone and abandoned he may be, all his friends are persuaded that he *can* and *should* leave his bottle at once and forever. Nay, the man himself is conscious of his power and obligation to do so. Yes, and there are frequent cases of his actually doing so, and that without the aid of renewing grace. I do not adduce the case of the reformed inebriate to prove that men ever will exercise a "repentance to salvation" without being renewed in the spirit of their minds, but to oppose the notion, that they never can, but must act *necessarily* in accordance with their permanent inclinations and affections. And yet it is worth while to stop here and inquire, if the drunkard can, without

grace, leave *his* sin, why can not *others* leave *their's*? And if they can leave any, why can they not leave *all*? Why at least can they not fully *resolve* to leave all, and thus secure (with pardon) that sanctifying grace, which will render them ultimately successful. But let it be borne in mind, that I am here speaking only of *natural* ability. And if it be here asked, as it sometimes is asked, whether *natural ability* is any help to relieve *moral inability*, I will only say, the former never *of itself* overcomes the latter. And yet the *latter* could never be overcome without the *former*.*

I do not know that any *gracious* affection or passion must *necessarily precede* repentance.

* Dr. Chalmers goes still farther. He maintains, that man is responsible for his emotions, affections and belief, because of his power over his faculty of attention. In his Bridgewater Treatise he says, "It is thus that we *can will* the right emotions into being, not immediately, but mediately — *as the love of God, by thinking of God*, the admiration of moral excellence by means of a serious and steadfast attention to it. Emotions, though not voluntary of themselves are so far voluntary in their proximate or immediate causes, in that the mind, to a certain extent, and by the control which it has over the faculty of attention, can will those ideas into its presence, by which the emotions are awakened. Man can, by means of these objects, *either kindle the right emotions in his bosom*, or make his escape from those emotions that trouble and annoy him."

It is true, that as Paul has told us in the text, "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation." But he can only mean, that where this sorrow does exist, it promotes or increases repentance, as the more a man grieves over his past sins, the more eager and determined he will be to forsake and avoid them. But he does not say, that this is the *only* way in which repentance is produced. So religion promotes learning. Yet who would infer from this fact, that piety must *always* precede education? We may admit, perhaps, the opinion of Johnson, that "sorrow, fear and anxiety, are properly, *not parts but adjuncts* of repentance; yet they are too closely connected with it, to be separated from it." But while "godly sorrow" is an invariable *attendant*, it may not necessarily be a precursor of repentance.

But it is time to present the direct and positive proof of the sinner's obligation to repent. An all-sufficient and unmistakable proof of this obligation, is found in the commands of God. If it were not a duty, he would not

require it. But many are his injunctions of it in his word. They have been already quoted for another purpose in the foregoing discourse. Yet it will be now needful to quote them again. According to Mat. 3 : 2, John, the forerunner of Christ, opened his ministry by preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And according to Mat. 3 : 8, and Luke 3 : 8, he preached, "Bring forth fruit meet for, or worthy of repentance," thus virtually enjoining repentance itself. According to Mat. 4 : 17, Christ said the same, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." According to Mark 1 : 15, "Repent and believe the Gospel." And according to Rev. 3 : 3, 19, he said, "Hold fast and repent. Be zealous and repent." Again, according to Mark 6 : 12, the disciples whom Christ first commissioned to preach his Gospel, "went out and preached that men *should* repent." And according to Acts 2 : 38, when on the day of Pentecost three thousand inquired, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to

them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you." And soon after he said to another assembly, 3: 19, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted." Also according to 8: 22, he said to Simon Magus, "Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness." According to Acts 17: 30, Paul said to the Athenians, "God now commandeth *all men everywhere* to repent." And again, 26: 20, he said, he taught all to whom he preached, that they "*should repent* and turn to God and do works meet for *repentance*." How plain, then, the duty which God has so positively and repeatedly enjoined.

But even if none of the above commands had been found on the pages of inspiration, there still would have been sufficient proof that all men are bound to repent. We see it in the very *nature* of the duty. What is repentance? It is a resolution to "cease to do evil and learn to do well." And can any one doubt whether he is bound to resolve that he will cease at once from his wrong doing? Or, if you doubt the correctness of this definition,

and insist that repentance is *godly sorrow for sin*, or that it is *reformation from sin*, I ask, can any one doubt whether he should be sorry for his sins, or whether he ought to forsake them? On the other hand, what is *impenitance*? It is continuance in a prevailing purpose of transgression and rebellion. Remaining impenitent, is virtually keeping on in the old and long-continued course of sin, defying God's wrath and despising his offers of salvation. If, then, we ought to cease from sin and secure salvation, we ought to *resolve* that we will do so; for purpose must precede performance. And it is the purpose, rather than the conduct, that God regards. It is the inward motive and aim which confers, in his sight, moral character on human actions. How evident, then, in this view, is the obligation to repent.

When any one injures ourselves, we feel that the least amends he can make, is to cease from his injurious conduct. Nothing is more evident than that he should *resolve* to do so, forth-

with. Nothing is more evident, than that he is utterly without excuse, if he determines or even *desires* to repeat the injury any longer. And it must be equally evident, that we are bound to resolve on ceasing from all our sins against God and man. Much as men strive to convince themselves and others that they are not under obligation to repent, it is impossible for them to rid themselves of the consciousness of this responsibility. All the impenitent have more or less conviction that they ought to leave the wrong for the right way, which is no less than a conviction that they are under obligation to repent.

And now, in conclusion, I call on you, my fellow sinners, to bring the foregoing truths home, and to lay them upon your consciences. Try no longer to regard yourselves as helpless beings that are not bound to repent, till the Spirit of God comes and puts repentance within you. Much as you may excuse yourselves, God will make you no allowances on the score of inability. While you strive to justify your

continuance in impenitency, he regards you as "after your hardness and impenitent heart, treasuring up unto yourselves wrath against the day of wrath." While you say you must wait till the Spirit comes to your aid, he "*now* commandeth all men *everywhere* to repent." He therefore calls on *you* to do so, whether you have the aid of the Spirit, or have it not. And you see that these calls are many, and loud. How dare you, then, reject them? Especially, how dare you attempt to justify your neglect of them on a plea which you would shudder to make at his final bar—a plea that is the more heinous and horrid, as it virtually charges on "the Judge of all the earth," the grievous unrighteousness of requiring of you what you are not bound to render. And yet, if you have given the foregoing remarks a candid attention, you must have seen, as probably you have seen long before, that the repentance required of you is most reasonable, and that you are subject to no inability which can excuse your neglect of it. Oh beware, then, how you venture on such an impious plea any longer.

Are you not conscious of a strong and cherished attachment to sin, and of an equally strong and welcome aversion to holiness? And are you not equally conscious that these are the only things which keep you from repentance? Will you insist that as you are so much in love with doing wrong, you are not bound to abandon it, or that as you hate your duty so much, you are under no obligation to perform it? You will see, if you look closely and candidly into your hearts, that you are as free and voluntary in refusing to repent, as you are in any other act of disobedience. What shadow of excuse can you have, then, for remaining in the ways of sin any longer?

But it is true, that though you are perfectly able and free to repent, yet as your wills are so perverse, through your love of sin and hatred of holiness, there is no hope that you ever will repent, unless the sovereign and effectual influence of the Spirit should make you "willing in the day of his power." What, then, are your feelings in relation to such a

divine interference? Are you *now* willing to have the Almighty's hand thus reached down from heaven to pluck you as a brand from the everlasting burnings? I fear you are not. But whether it be so, I leave yourselves to decide. And if you see yourselves unwilling to be saved in such a sovereign way, how dark must be your prospects.

Yet perhaps you will insist that you do verily feel the need of the Spirit's influence to renew you to repentance, and do verily *desire* to receive it. Would to God it were so. But do not deceive yourselves. Perhaps you are not willing to have repentance wrought in you *now*, and only think you would like to have it done to-morrow, next week, or next month. But this is of no avail. For when the *morrow*, the *week* or *month* comes round, you will be as unwilling as ever to be made immediately the penitent and obedient children of God. Yet I will suppose you are now really willing to receive at once, a "repentance to salvation." And then I would urge you to act accordingly. Fix your attention upon the Spirit, and open

your hearts to his influence. Hitherto it might have been said of you, as of some of old, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." — Acts 7: 51. And if you continue to do so, you may quench its light, and grieve away its influence forever. Consider, too, the *mode* in which the Spirit is to operate, if it ever brings you to repentance: that it will work by the instrumentality of the *truth* on your understandings, and through them upon your hearts. Ponder well, then, the word of inspiration; especially those commands and warnings, those appeals and promises, by which it is urging you to escape by repentance from the final wrath of God. Do this, that, so to speak, you may put the more means into the hand of the Spirit for the accomplishment of this momentous work. Fully confess to yourselves, to your fellow men, and especially to your God, your obligation to repent. And be ready to yield to every argument and influence which urge you to the all-important duty. And when you do all this, I shall hope, as I *now pray*, that you may soon have a "repentance unto life."

SERMON IX.

NECESSITY AND EVIDENCES OF REPENTANCE.

“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation.” — 2 Cor. 7: 10.

In former discourses on this passage, we have considered the nature, author and obligation of evangelical repentance. And according to the method previously proposed, we have yet to consider its necessity and its connection with reformation — treating the latter as the evidence of a genuine “repentance to salvation.”

1. Its necessity. It is needful, because it is

an indispensable *condition or term of salvation*. Certain theologians object to its being so regarded. Some of them say, faith *is*, but repentance is *not* a condition of salvation; while others say that *neither* are. Others again insist that both are *terms*, yet neither are *conditions*. All this, however, is only a war about words. What, then, is the meaning of these words? Webster says, the signification of *condition* and *terms*, when applied to contracts or covenants, is precisely the same. They are stipulations which, when complied with, "bind the parties." A condition is something which when done by one party, binds the other to do a certain other thing. It need not be on what is called the *quid pro quo* principle — the principle that is of complete remuneration. It is not necessary in every contract, that the one party, in order to bind the other to a specified thing, should do something else of equal value. J. J. Astor deeded to his son the famous Astor House in New York city, *on condition*, it is said, of his son's paying him a single dollar,

while this house is worth more than a million. In the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son, God promised Christ that he should have "a seed to serve him," on condition of his laying down his life as a ransom for sinners. In this, then, the condition may be regarded in the light of an equivalent. But in the covenant of grace between God and sinners, the condition is infinitely inferior. All agree, that neither faith nor repentance is the *ground or compensation* for which the sinner is forgiven and saved. All agree that he is redeemed only for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered for him. God covenants, or offers and promises to save sinners on this ground; and yet it is with the proviso that they shall repent. And it is not till they do repent, that he is bound by his promise, contract or covenant, to justify and save them. All that we mean, then, by this *condition* of salvation, is *that* on the fulfillment of which God promises to save the ungodly, and in the absence of which he will cast them off forever.

Let us now look into the word of God, and see how often it holds forth repentance as a condition of eternal life.

Said Ezekiel 18 : 30, "Repent and turn yourselves from your transgressions, so *iniquity shall not be your ruin.*" Here is a virtual declaration, that repentance will secure salvation, while impenitence will insure eternal death. And by the same prophet God said 33 : 11, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; *but* that the wicked turn from his way and live." Here the same truth is taught as in the previous passage, although the word repent is not used. It is that God will not and cannot save the sinner unless he repent.

But much more frequently and fully is this truth taught in the New Testament. In Mark 1 : 4, and Luke 3 : 3, we are told that John Baptist "preached the baptism of repentance *for the remission of sins,*" and thus, that it is necessary to eternal life. In Luke 13 : 3 and 5, Christ uttered and repeated the declaration, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise *perish* ;"

thereby plainly implying, that all who are penitent will be saved ; all who are not, will be lost. Again, 15 : 7, he said, "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance." But why this joy, unless repentance will secure salvation ? And in 24 : 47, he commands that "repentance and *remission of sins* should be preached in his name among all nations," thus authorizing all his ministers, of every age and clime, to promise pardon and eternal life to all who repent.

Peter said, Acts 2 : 38, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, *for the remission of sins.*" As men may be lost *with* baptism, and saved *without* it, we are taught in this passage that repentance alone secures salvation. On another occasion, the same apostle said, 3 : 19, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your *sins may be blotted out.*" And when he had given an account of the faith and baptism of Cornelius and his company, the disciples said, 11 : 18, "Then hath

God also to the Gentiles granted repentance *unto life.*" In the text, Paul told the Corinthians, that "godly sorrow worketh repentance *to salvation.*" And in his second epistle, 3 : 9. Peter tells us that God is "not willing that any should *perish*, but that all should come to repentance." Do not all these passages declare, or at least unmistakably imply, that all who repent will be saved, and all who remain inpenitent will be inevitably lost? How, then, can any deny that repentance is an indispensable condition of eternal life?

In none of these passages is *faith* mentioned, either directly or by implication. Some have said it is implied in the "baptism" and the "turning to God," which in some rare instances are mentioned in connection with repentance. But baptism is a symbol or emblem of regeneration and sanctification — not of justification. Nor does it point any more to faith than to any other Christian grace. We read of "the baptism of *repentance*," but not of the baptism of faith. The command is, "Believe *and* be

baptized." And faith is not turning to God, but *trusting* in him. All the foregoing Scriptures prove then, if they prove anything, that eternal life is promised on the single condition of repentance. If any were lost who have it, or any saved without it, the fact would falsify all these twelve passages which have just been quoted from the word of God.

As I understand it, if God but sees in the hearts of sinners a sincere and full determination to forsake all their sins and to do all their duty, he does not wait to have them fulfill it, but takes, as I have already said, the will for the deed, seals their forgiveness, records their names in the book of life, and gives all that sustaining and sanctifying grace, which they need for fulfilling this, their resolution to reform. And though their reformation may at first be very imperfect, they will persevere in their purpose and their efforts, till at death their reformation will be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. They will act like a man who has resolved to go to a certain place to

receive an inheritance. At first he hesitated on account of the press of other concerns, or of the uncertainty whether he could secure the inheritance. But on further information and further reflection, his mind is fully made up, that *go he will*. And he sets out accordingly. Though he occasionally loses his way, he does not give up his purpose, but returns to the right road, and continues his journey. If he meets with disaster, the wreck of a carriage or the death of a horse, this does not shake his determination or daunt his courage. He repairs, and again presses forward. And whatever mistakes, mishaps or hindrances he has to encounter, he perseveres, till he reaches the place and receives the inheritance.

Still, it is true, that *faith* is also an indispensable condition of salvation. For the Scriptures say not only, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," but also, "He that believeth not, shall be damned." When sinners inquired of old what they must do to be saved, they were sometimes told, as on the day of

Pentecost, "Repent, for the remission of sins." And sometimes, as in the case of the jailor of Philippi, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Nor is this any conflict of Scripture with Scripture. For in truth, as was said in a previous discourse, repentance and faith are both necessary to salvation. If either were wanting, the soul must be lost. But where one is found, the other will also be found. That state of heart from which the one is sure to flow, the other will as invariably flow. It is chiefly his attachment to sin which keeps a man from looking to Christ for salvation. And when that is broken, (as it effectually is by his resolution to forsake it fully and forever,) there is nothing left to keep him from "believing to the saving of the soul." Requiring and securing one of these graces, then, is virtually requiring and securing both.

Thus we see, that repentance is absolutely necessary to our salvation, since God in his sovereignty has appointed it, as an indispensable condition on which to grant eternal life.

And even if it were not necessary for God to fix on this condition, yet since he *has done so*, it is now absolutely necessary on our part, to comply with it, since God can never be turned from his purposes. Our only alternative, is repentance or perdition.

But as many are disposed to murmur at the requirement of repentance, as hard and unreasonable, it may not be amiss to consider more at large than we have done, why God has made it an invariable prerequisite. For he has not done so in simple, naked sovereignty, but in wisdom and benevolence. He has done so, because the fitness of things and the highest good of his universe required it. There are two particular reasons for which he requires repentance as a condition of salvation.

One reason is, because it is needful in order to *sustain his moral government*. Moral beings must be governed by law. And the restraining power of law resides mainly in its penalties. Everything, then, that impairs the penalties of the law of God, impairs his authority. And

the unconditional pardon of the transgressor would so effectually neutralize the threatenings of that law, as to destroy its restraining force. For it would practically contradict these threatenings of God against transgressors. While in his word he says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die, in unconditional pardon, he would say with Satan, "Thou shalt *not* surely die." And by thus removing the fear of its penalty, the law becomes powerless.

It was in part to prevent this effect of forgiveness, that the atonement was instituted. Christ needed to die as a substitute for sinners, in order to show, that though God does pardon sin, he has nevertheless an infinite abhorrence of it; so much so, that Christ must needs "bear it in his own body on the tree." Yet something beside the atonement was needful to uphold the law of God in its restraining power. It was necessary to guard it by the certain conditions on which salvation should be granted to its transgressors. And of these, repentance is especially important. For if

pardon were granted to the offender, while he remains impenitent, and consequently still in rebellion, it would neutralize the denunciations of the law, and thus encourage transgression. But the requirement of evangelical repentance, as a condition of forgiveness, is a sufficient safeguard against such danger. For such repentance is a virtual acknowledgment, on the part of the penitent, of his obligation to obey the law. And thus it sustains divine authority. But what is much more, it is a determined purpose to forsake the ways of sin, and to walk the narrow path of new obedience: a resolution sincere and full-hearted, thorough and perpetual. It is also a resolution that is sure to be carried out in practice, and has, therefore, a restraining power equal to that of the legal penalty. For the penitent obeys for conscience sake, and not for wrath's.

And the requirement of repentance must be necessary for sustaining the government of God, not only on earth, but in other portions of his moral universe. Doubtless the general

principles by which he governs man are the same as those by which he governs other moral beings — principles founded on the nature and relation of things. The Bible teaches us that angels, holy and unholy, are the attentive inspectors of his government on earth. And we know not but that the inhabitants of many worlds are studying man's history now, or will be taught it at the general Judgment. As, then, God strove to show Satan the righteousness of Job — as the Corinthian woman had "power on her head because of the angels" — as we are continually subject to the efforts both of good and evil angels, and as it is God's "intent, that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places shall be known by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God," it must be evident that the dealings of God must be known to the inhabitants of other worlds. And if they saw him pardon rebel man, while he still clung to his rebellion, would it not pain this moral sensibility to right and wrong, and to the fitness of things, a sensibility which must

be inherent in every moral being? And would not this tend to lessen the reverence of his majesty, or at least to weaken their reliance on his wisdom and his immutability; thus impairing, in their view, his supreme authority? One reason, then, why God requires repentance as a condition of salvation is, because it is needful to sustain his moral government.

The other reason is, because it is *needful to the welfare of those who are saved*. Without repentance, they could not be happy, though they were forgiven and received to heaven. For “the way of the transgressor is hard.” And “the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” Nor can they have any real enjoyment or rest till they resolve to abandon all their iniquities. But just so soon as they do come to such a resolution—in other words, just so soon as they *repent*—such a quiet and calm comes over them as they never felt before. So long, too, as they refuse to leave their sins, they cannot engage in that “godliness which is profita-

ble unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." But just so soon as they determine to leave their evil ways, they begin, by consequence, a life of obedience. It will be seen at once, that impotence prevents reformation, while repentance promotes it. For man can do nothing till he resolves to do it. And the full resolution is half the performance. The whole difficulty in the way of obedience is attachment to sin. And this attachment is broken and weakened by a firm determination to utterly and forever forsake it. This may be somewhat illustrated by the change which comes over the mind of an emigrant, on his resolution to leave his native land for some far distant country, to spend the rest of his days there. At first, as he thinks of that loved spot called *home*, with its many endearments and conveniences, he says within himself, "How can I bear to leave them all, and brave the hardships of a long and painful journey, to the wilderness world of Oregon or California?" Yet, as he thinks, on the other

hand, of the vast gain in prospect, he is powerfully attracted to this far-off land. Still, the struggle is a painful one. But when his purpose is fully taken, the struggle is mainly over, and the pain is greatly relieved. For, when he is fully decided to leave his native land, he begins to lose his attachment to it: and when he has fixed his mind on a home on "the farthest verge of this green earth," he feels a strong and growing desire to be in possession of it. And such is the adaptation and tendency of repentance to dislodge the heart from sin, and to excite in it an interest and enjoyment in the service and favor of God. Thus, though it be not the *efficient* cause, it is at least a very powerful *exciting* cause of that experimental and practical godliness without which we cannot be happy, either in this or the coming world. So long as our impenitent hearts are clinging to sin, we cannot perform, much less *enjoy* the service of God, either on earth or in heaven. Still less can we "rejoice," as saints on earth do, "with joy unspeakable and full of glory;"

nor be “meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,” where is “fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore.” But all this blessedness does repentance secure by virtue of that connection of it with the reformation of which we have spoken. But this connection of *repentance* with *reformation* we have yet to consider more at large. And as already proposed, we shall regard the former as evidence of the latter — an *evidence* not needed by “the Searcher of hearts,” but by *ourselves*, to show whether we have *such* a repentance as will secure our salvation.

In a former discourse, it was maintained, that repentance is not reformation *itself*, as Dr. Campbell and some others suppose; but is its necessary antecedent or precursor — that it is a *resolution* to reform — a resolution always followed by amendment of heart and of life. The occurrence of the latter, then, is necessary to prove the existence of the former. We have had occasion to remark, that John Baptist commanded his hearers to “bring forth fruit *meet* for, or worthy of repentance;” which fruit must

be the *evidence* of repentance, according to the declaration of Christ, "the tree is known by his fruit:" also, that these fruits must be the same as the "works meet for repentance" which the Apostle Paul enjoined; and therefore, that they must be those *good* works which constitute a thorough reformation.

What, then, are the good fruits or good works which evince a "repentance unto life?" Such, certainly, as would most probably and most properly result from this repentance. And what is this but doing what is purposed to be done? What is it, but ceasing from those sins of heart and life which we have resolved to abandon, and the commencement of those duties of heart and life which we purposed to discharge?—what, but a new and opposite set of affections, and a new and opposite course of external conduct?—what, but love to God and his people, to his word and his worship, instead of aversion to them?—and what, but a general obedience to his commands, instead of a prevailing disregard of them.

As repentance is a final and fixed resolution to abandon the world as a portion, and to take heaven as a portion, the penitent may be expected not to set his affections on things on earth, but on things in heaven. And, as it is a full determination to escape "from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God," he may be expected to "live not henceforth unto himself, but unto him who died for him." In short, the fitting fruits of repentance unto life, are a thorough change of conduct and character, resulting from new motives and new principles.

Some, it is true, are comparatively correct in their external conduct, during the days of their impenitency. And in these, the change on repentance will not be so visible to others. But they themselves will see the change is great indeed, especially as to their affections, motives and aims. While the change in the more immoral and profligate must be very evident and striking to all who have known their former characters. Yet some of these are compara-

tively taciturn and reserved, while others are more out-spoken and bustling. And in the latter, though in itself no greater than that in the former, the change will appear the greater. In all, however, the *real* reformation will be great indeed. And, therefore, if no moral change is perceived, there is no evidence of a "repentance unto life."

The topics of this discourse are of great practical importance to two classes of hearers. The first comprises all those who are confessedly, and in their own views, still impenitent; and who therefore are still in the "gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity," as regards the present life, and are exposed to eternal wrath in the world to come. To such, then, let me say,

My fellow sinners, you have just been taught that your salvation hangs in part upon your exercising that repentance which consists in a full and determined resolution to forsake all your sins, and to strive ever afterwards to do your whole duty; that unless you do thus resolve, you must perish, eternally perish. But

it may be, you, like many others, are disposed to murmur at this condition of salvation, as if it were too severe. Yet you have just been shown that God could not have offered eternal life on other terms, without putting to hazard the welfare of his universe; nay, that without this repentance, you yourselves could not be happy on earth or in heaven. Oh, cease from such murmurs, then, lest they prove as ruinous as they are unreasonable.

In a former discourse, repentance was urged upon you as a reasonable and all-important *duty*. And you have seen with what frequency, fitness and authority, God has commanded it. This alone should have led you to repent. But now I urge it upon you as an unspeakable *privilege*. I urge it upon you as a matter of infinite *importance to yourselves*, because that *without it* there is no escape from eternal death and wo, and that *with it*, there is a certainty of eternal life and blessedness. And since this salvation would be an infinite gain to you, it should be welcome to you on conditions most

severe. How ill it becomes you to murmur at the necessary and easy condition of repentance. As it is one simple, instantaneous act of the mind, on this one act hangs your everlasting all. If you but come to the full purpose to turn from sin to holiness, God will at that instant meet you with pardon, and with the promise of eternal life. But if you fail thus to purpose, you must lie down in endless sorrow. How important, then, that you repent without delay, lest death or distraction overtake you unexpectedly, and thus render your penitence impossible. It is the more important to do so, as it is so simple, easy and instantaneous; for who can estimate the additional torture which you would endure, on reflecting forever in yonder dark world, that you have fixed yourselves in eternal wo, by refusing to put forth this single and instantaneous exercise of repentance. Oh, save yourselves from this aggravated, endless sorrow, by resolving at once, "I will arise and go to my Father."

And here let me warn you of one fatal rock on which many awakened souls have been

wrecked and ruined. Sinners, on seeking salvation, are apt to resolve on *partial* reformation. They will purpose, it may be, to give up (for a time, till they see whether they find salvation) their more open and flagrant sins, such as profane swearing, sabbath breaking and drunkenness, while their many other sins they refuse to abandon. And so also they resolve to begin certain duties, such as reading the Bible, attending church, and perhaps the offering of a formal prayer, while their many other duties they deliberately refuse to perform. And after such partial and superficial reformation, it is common for them to wonder why God does not accept their services, and meet them in his mercy with pardon and eternal life. Whereas, they have made no approach at all to that repentance which is to salvation. A repentance unto life knows no reserves. It is a determination to give up *every* sin of *heart* as well as of life, and to give it up *at once* and *forever*. So also is it a determination to do *now* and *forever* after, *all* the duties which we owe to God and man. See to it, then, that your re-

pentance is full and unreserved, for otherwise, it will be unavailing, and will indeed be no repentance at all.

The other portion, to whom the topics of this discourse are of special importance, are those who are in doubt whether they have or have *not* a "repentance unto life." And to such I would briefly say, this you must have seen is a question of infinite importance to you, as infinite consequences hang upon it. It is a matter of infinite moment, then, that you settle it correctly. And you have just been told what is the adequate evidence of this repentance—*a thorough reformation of heart and of life*. If, then, any of you are destitute of these "fruits meet for repentance," it is time you had seen yourselves to be "still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity." Rather, it is time you were putting forth a new and better purpose of reformation—a purpose that shall eventuate forthwith in "newness of life." And what you need to do, should be done without delay. For that night of death may be near, in which no one can work.

S E R M O N X .

ALLEGED DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY OF SALVATION
O B V I A T E D .

“ Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.”— John 6 : 37.

I believe the way of life is so plainly pointed out in the foregoing discourses, that all who give them due attention can find salvation. Yet many awakened sinners are apt to imagine there are certain serious difficulties in their way ; which mistaken notion is liable to *delay*, if not to *defeat* their entrance into the strait gate. It is needful, therefore, to give the sup-

posed difficulties a particular examination. And although their fallacy might be seen, by looking at them in the light of what has been already said on the conditions of salvation, I propose now to examine them in the light of the promise contained in the text.

“Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” These are the words of Christ. What is it, then, to *come to him*? It is, evidently, leaving our sins, to rely on him for pardon and eternal life. But, if this needs proof, it is found in abundance among those passages where the like expression is used. Said the evangelical prophet, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, *come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price.*” — Isaiah 55: 1. Here is that figure called *parallelism*, in which the Scriptures so much abound: a figure in which the same thought is repeated, yet in varied language. Hence, to *come to Christ*, who is the “water of life,” of which “if a man drink, he shall never

thirst," as well as "the bread that came down from heaven," is the same as to "buy wine and milk, *without* money, and *without* price:" that is, it is to accept of salvation as the free gift of God, through Jesus Christ.

That this is the meaning of the text, is still more evident from the manner in which he uses the same expression in the context. "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that *cometh to me* shall never hunger; and *he that believeth on me* shall never thirst." — John 6: 35. Here is another *parallelism*; for the expression, "he that *cometh to me* shall never hunger," means precisely the same as the expression, "he that *believeth on me* shall never thirst." To come to Christ, means, then, to rely on him for salvation. And again, he said, "If any man thirst, let *him come unto me and drink*. He that *believeth on me*, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." — John 7: 37, 38. Here, too, is the same figure, although, as is common, it is in the form of a climax: the first clause ex-

pressing the *sufficiency* of the waters of life, and the other, their *abundance*: the *coming* to Christ in the one, is the same as the *believing on him* in the other.

I will give but one passage more. It is from John on Patmos. "The Spirit and the bride say, *come*. And let him that heareth, say, *come*. And let him that is athirst *come*; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev. 22: 17. Few passages of Scripture are so often mis-quoted as this. The mistake is in repeating the word "come," in the last clause; as if it read, "whosoever will, let him *come*." But this word, which is repeated in the foregoing clauses, is omitted and its place supplied by an expression meaning the same thing, viz., "let him take the water of life freely," and thus the passage shows, that *to come to Christ* means the same as to "lay hold by faith on eternal life."

Nor is it less evident, that none who come to Christ in the exercise of such a faith, shall in anywise or on any account fail of salvation.

This blessed truth is asserted in every promise to the penitent and believing sinner. It is indirectly asserted by Christ in his declaration to the unbelieving Jews: "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." — John 5: 40. For here he virtually declares, that all that is necessary to eternal life, is *to come to him*. But in the text, his promise is peculiarly emphatic. It is expressed in the original Greek, with a double negative, which, according to that language, intensifies negation, and seems intended to meet and remove the imaginary difficulties which often discourage awakened sinners. It is as if he had said to them, "If you do but come to me, nothing shall prevent my saving you with an everlasting salvation." And now let us go with this assurance, as with a torch in hand, to examine these difficulties.

Some insist that they *have not the requisite ability to come unto Christ*. And it is, indeed, true, that there is a sense in which they need help from on high. And Christ, therefore, said, "No man can come unto me, except it be given

unto him of my Father." And, "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." But they mistake as to the kind of aid which they need. It is not any new faculties, nor any additional strength, physical or mental, that they need. Nor is such help afforded to those who do come. It is not weakness, but unwillingness, that keeps them from coming. All they need is a *disposition*, or "a willing mind" to use the ability already possessed. If they had a willing mind to come to Christ, "it would be accepted of them according to that they have, and not according to that they have not." — 2 Cor. 8: 12. Yet many are confident, no doubt, that they are willing to escape divine wrath, and are trying hard to make their escape. But they are not trying to do the exact thing, on condition of which God has promised to save the sinner, but are trying to merit his compassion and favor by tears and prayers, or other services, while he requires of them simply to resolve to turn from all their sins, and to rely on the

merits of Christ for pardon and salvation. For if they truly endeavored thus to repent and believe, they would find no other difficulty in their way but the reluctance and aversion of their own minds. All they need, then, is to be made "*willing* in the day of God's power." The condition of salvation is not a difficult one. It is only to *ask* and *receive*—to *knock* at the door of mercy and be admitted—to hear, that the soul may live—to come unto Christ that they might have life. Sinners are unable to come to him, only because they cannot in this case (as they cannot in any other) act against their own wills. Their inability, then, is not their *excuse*, but their sin. And they are the more wicked in pleading it, because in doing so, they virtually charge the righteous God with a most grievous injustice. For while he commands them to repent and believe, and threatens them with the "greater damnation," if they fail to do so, they charge him with unrighteously requiring what they are unable to perform. And the plea is as dangerous as it is

impious. For while they are making this excuse, they will not be striving to enter in at the strait gate. Nor is it those who are *driven* or *dragged*, but those who come of their own accord to Christ, that he promises not to "cast out." He does teach, it is true, that those who come to him, are drawn of his Father. But this is done "with the cords of a man, with bands of love."—Hosea 11: 4. It is by the persuasions of the word and Spirit, operating on the sinner's will. "Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father," that is, effectually, "cometh unto me," said he. See John 6: 44, 45. *So* draws the Father. Nor is any Gospel sinner devoid of such aid. If they would "*hear and learn of the Father*" as they ought, they would come to Christ. And all those who fail to yield voluntarily to such persuasions, and thus to come willingly to Christ, must inevitably perish.

To those who plead inability, I would say, You should act in the matter of coming to Christ, as you do in all other matters: that is,

on *your own consciousness*. You know — you cannot but know — that you are free agents: free, then, to come to Christ or to stay away. You must be conscious, that, if you stay away, it is because you *choose* to do so. In other words, if you remain impenitent, it is because you choose to continue in sin; and if you remain unbelieving, it is because you refuse to rely on Christ for pardon and redemption. The most wicked and unwise thing you can do, then, is, to refuse to come to Christ, and to justify yourselves in thus refusing. It is *wicked*, because it is a voluntary continuance of transgression, and an abuse of saving grace, together with a justification of yourselves, which imputes injustice to God. It is *unwise*, because, by excusing your delay, you are increasing your difficulty and danger in regard to your salvation. All you think and say in justification of yourselves tends to occupy and quiet your minds, and thus to prevent your anxiety and efforts to “enter into life.” Whereas, the best thing you could do would be to admit that

you are without excuse, and deeply guilty in not going to Christ without delay, and to dwell upon this guilt intensely. For thus you would more thoroughly “stir up yourselves to lay hold on God.” — Isaiah 64 : 7. Act, then, on your conscious free will, and resolve at once to “take the water of life freely.”

Again : some sinners fear, or profess to fear, that “*they are not chosen to salvation, consequently, that no atonement has been made for them.*” And it is to be feared, that these apprehensions have been often suggested by the indiscreet teachings of some religious instructors — especially by the manner in which they have taught the doctrine of a limited atonement, and the doctrine that saving faith consists in believing “Christ died for me personally.” Those who indulge such fears should consider, that the sacrifice of Christ for sin is an *infinite* sacrifice ; sufficient, therefore, to atone for the sins of all : that, being infinite, it is not made up of parts, to be apportioned out to particular persons : that Christ died not

for certain individuals, but for the race: that he is "the Lamb of God which *taketh away the sin of the world,*" — John 1 : 29, — in that he was offered on Calvary to remove sin, as a whole, out of the way of God's justice, and in such a respect that he can now be "just" to the universe, while he is "the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." — Rom. 3 : 26. He is thus the "*door*" by which "if any man enter in, he shall be saved," — John 10 : 9, — a door which, if large enough for *one*, is large enough for *all*. What the Savior suffered was necessary for the salvation of a single sinner; and more he need not have suffered, if the whole race were saved. A single difficulty in the divine government stood in the way of the salvation alike of one and all. And that difficulty Christ has "taken out of the way, nailing it to his cross."

Those who are afraid that no atonement is made for them, will find enough to quell their fears in the following passages of the word of God. "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ

Jesus ; who gave himself *a ransom for all.*" — 1 Tim. 2 : 5, 6. "We trust in the living God, who is the *Savior of all men*, especially of those that believe." — 1 Tim. 4 : 10. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor ; that he by the grace of God should taste *death for every man.*" — Heb. 2 : 9. "And if *any* man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous : and he is the propitiation for our sins : and not for ours only, but also for the sins *of the whole world.*" — 1 John 2 : 1, 2. Is there not enough in these passages to prove that an ample atonement is made for all mankind ?

And those who are afraid of not having been *chosen to salvation*, may find enough in the following, perhaps, to allay their fears. "Ho, *every one that thirsteth*, come ye to the waters, and *he that hath no money*, come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." — Isaiah 55 : 1. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy

laden, and I will give you rest." — Matt. 11 : 28. "If *any man thirst*, let him come unto me and drink." — John 7 : 37. I know it is insisted by some that these invitations are addressed to those sinners only who *feel* their need and their helplessness. But what right have they thus to *add* to the Word of God, and thereby to take from it its fullness of grace? These passages are evidently intended to offer salvation to all the needy. They say nothing about the *conviction* of need ; much less do they say how deep must be the conviction. And surely all who *fear they are not chosen to salvation* must have conviction enough. But, as if to settle all doubts on the subject, Christ said, by the apostle of Patmos, "*Whosoever will*, let him take the water of life *freely*." — Rev. 22 : 17. Could the universality of the offer be expressed more plainly?

But that these fears of sinners are groundless is still more manifest in the light of the promises, that all who seek salvation aright shall find it ; and that all who knock at the door of

mercy as they ought, shall certainly be admitted. Said the prophet, "Let the *wicked* forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and *he will have mercy on him*: and to our God, for *he will abundantly pardon.*" — Isaiah 55 : 7. What need have sinners to know whether they have been previously "chosen unto salvation?" It is enough for them to know that they are "wicked" and "unrighteous;" and that they forsake their "way" and their "thoughts;" and that they "turn unto the Lord," for then, at all events he will "have mercy" upon them, and "abundantly pardon." Said Christ, "I am the door: by me if *any man* enter in, *he shall be saved.*" — John 10 : 9. And again, "Behold I stand at the door, and knock: if *any man* will hear my voice, and open the door, I *will come in to him*, and will sup with him, and he with me." — Rev. 3 : 20. *Any man*, then, whether previously chosen to salvation or not — *any man*, who is willing to enter heaven through the atoning blood of Christ; or, which amounts

to the same thing, any man who will open his heart to Christ, as to his salvation, shall have eternal life. And still more positive is the promise in the text. It assures every sinner, that, if he will but come to Christ, by the exercise of faith in his atoning blood, he shall be as certainly accepted and saved as any son or daughter of Adam.

I entreat all who are indulging these fears, to look at their folly and danger in doing so. Be assured, my fellow sinners, that there is nothing in the electing love of God to keep you out of heaven. So far as that love avails, it is all on the side of saving grace. If you are lost, it will be owing to nothing but your impenitence and unbelief, or because, as Christ has expressed it, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." — John 5 : 40. And, if you are lost, you will perish while Christ is ready and wishing to save you; and he will mourn over you as he did over the inhabitants of Jerusalem, when he said, "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them

which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."— Mat. 23: 37. Beware, then, how you perish thus needlessly, under such aggravated guilt.

Others, again, are troubled with the fear that they *have not conviction enough* to be converted and saved; and must, therefore, wait for more, before they come to Christ. This apprehension is often occasioned by their having seen others in very deep distress before they were converted. For it is very common, with awakened sinners, to think they must feel as *others* have felt, on passing from death unto life. Yet no notion is more unfounded. There is every diversity to be found among the anxious, in time of a revival. And while some have most excruciating distress, others have only a solemn and calm persuasion of the evil of their way, and of the importance of making their peace with God. Sometimes, too, this notion is the offspring of a self-righteous spirit, which inclines sinners to

think they must awake the compassion and merit the favor of God, by their suffering great distress of mind. Such persons mistake alarm and dread of wrath for that rational conviction which they need. Hence they strive to increase their distress, by dwelling on their danger, and on the greatness of the sufferings to which they are exposed. Whereas, if they would promote the right kind of conviction, they should examine their hearts and lives more faithfully by the Word of God, to see more fully their need of salvation. Satan fills the hearts of many with the notion that they must have more conviction, before they can be saved; and does it for the purpose of keeping them from coming at once to Christ.

To those thus deluded, I would say: You need no more distress; for God does not require of you tears and groans, remorse or alarm, as conditions of mercy, but repentance and faith. And you can repent and believe as easily now as if you had all the distress of the damned. Nor would such agonies move God's compassion,

and win his favor here, any more than they would were you lifting up cries from the torments of the pit of wo. If you are but rationally convinced of your exposure to final wrath, and of your need of deliverance from it, you have all the conviction you need. Distress, agitation and alarm will not help you to escape, any more than they would help the mariner in the dangers of a storm, or the merchant when his store is on fire. If you but see your danger, the more cool and calm you are, the better you can attend to "the things that belong to your peace." What unspeakable folly, then, to wait for more conviction, when it only keeps you from Christ, and thus prevents your salvation? Come, then, at once; "come to Christ, that you may have life;" for if you delay any longer, your day of grace may be gone forever.

And others again are fearful that *their sin is too great to be forgiven*. And if they look only at the multitude and magnitude of their transgressions, and at the "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," which God has

revealed against "every soul of man that doeth evil," — Rom. 2: 6-9, — it is not strange that they should despair of forgiveness. For they judge God by themselves. They know, the greater the injury done to themselves, the harder it is for them to overlook or forgive. But, "as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways." It is, so to speak, as easy for God to forgive a great sin, as a little one. As before stated, the only difficulty that ever stood in the way of his forgiving either was, in regard to his government. The difficulty was, in forgiving sin without weakening its penalty, and thus encouraging transgression. And as this difficulty has been removed by the atoning blood of Christ, God can now safely pardon the sins of all those who forsake them, and rely on the blood of Christ for justifying righteousness. For now it can be said of God, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." — Ps. 130: 4. Since, then, Christ, the Lamb of God, has taken away (in gross, so to speak,) "the

sin of the world," and become "the propitiation for the sins of the whole world," God is as ready to pardon sins of the foulest as of the faintest hue. And while there is nothing to hinder his forgiving the greatest sins, there are some considerations that plead especially in favor of their pardon. One consideration is, the greater the sin forgiven, the greater the gratitude, praise and service of the one forgiven: for, as Christ has told us, "they that are forgiven much, love much." — Luke 7: 42-7. While another is, that the greater in the view of the moral universe must be the glory of the forgiving grace. And thus was laid the foundation of the petition, "O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, *for it is great.*" — Ps. 25: 11. Here, then, is sufficient proof that the worst of sinners may be forgiven and saved. For all who study the plan of salvation must see, that "where sin has most abounded, there the saving grace of God much more abounds," — Rom. 5: 20, — that the redemption provided is "a plenteous redemption," and that the forgiving grace of God,

like all his other attributes, is infinite. To suppose, then, that some sins are too great to be forgiven, is to "limit the Holy One of Israel."

But we have a plainer proof, in the fact that *all* sinners, however great their guilt, are invited in the Word of God to come and be saved. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, — Isaiah 45 : 22, — "all," however sinful. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." — 55 : 1. "Every one that thirsteth," not every one that is *not a very great sinner*. "He that hath *no* money," not he that is not too sinful. "If *any man*," however wicked — "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "And *whosoever will*," be he ever so great a sinner, "let him take the water of life freely." Thus the vilest of sinners are invited as freely as any others. And if any such were to come to Christ, would he cast them out? Never. He of whom it is said, "Neither was any deceit in his mouth," does not thus de-

ceive and tantalize sinners. As, then, all are invited, all, even the worst, will be saved, if they do but come to the Savior.

But that the worst of sinners can be saved, is still more plainly shown in the fact that such have been already saved. Such was the fact with Manasseh, who "shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another," — 2 Kings 21: 16, — "made his children pass through the fire, in the worship of idols — treated the house of God with the utmost indignity, and made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do worse than the heathen, — 2 Chron. 33: 6–9, — but who yet obtained mercy — 12–16. Such, too, was the fact with Saul of Tarsus. He "made havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison." — Acts 8: 3. "And when they were put to death, he gave his voice against them; and being exceeding mad against them, he persecuted them even unto strange cities." — 26: 10, 11. Yet he, though as he confessed him-

self, "the chief of sinners," was nevertheless forgiven, and became a chief among the apostles. And such also were some of the Corinthian converts. Said Paul, "Neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And *such were some of you*: but ye are *washed*, but ye are *sanctified*, but ye are *justified* in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."—1 Cor. 6: 9–11. Nor can we doubt that many a modern convert was once as wicked as any who are lost.

But still more positive proof is found in the promises of salvation. These promises are not confined to those who have *not* been "sinners before the Lord exceedingly," but are made to all who comply with the simple and easy conditions of salvation. If any one "repent and be converted, his sins shall be blotted out."—Acts 3: 19. If any man "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, he shall be saved."—16: 31. "*Whosoever* shall call upon the name of the

Lord," that is, by faith, "he shall be saved." — Rom. 10: 13. And the promises of Christ himself are, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and *I will give you rest.*" — Mat. 11: 28. "I am the door; by me, *if any man* enter in, *he shall be saved.*" — John 10: 9. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: *if any man* will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." — Rev. 3: 20.

But, if the promise of the *text* were the only one of the kind that could be found in the Bible, this would be amply sufficient to prove that the worst of sinners might be saved, provided they would but comply with the conditions of salvation. "Him that cometh to me I will *in no wise* cast out." In these words, Christ names but one condition on which he will accept and save, viz., that of *coming to him*. All, then, that come to him, whatever may have been their previous guilt, may claim salvation on the ground of this promise. And will he reject any one of them? No: never. He has

averred that he will not, in the strongest possible terms. "He will *in no wise*," on no occasion, and on no account, "cast them out." Especially will he not do it on account of the greatness of their guilt. For he has given a specific pledge that he will not. To those who come, he says, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." — Isaiah 1: 18.

Yet says the distressed sinner, "Christ speaks, you know, of the sin against the Holy Ghost, that 'hath never forgiveness.' — Mark 3: 29. And that an apostle says, 'There is a sin unto death,' which we are not to pray for. — 1 John 5: 16, — and I am sorely afraid that I have committed such a sin." But I ask, what is the use of entertaining such a fear? Though you inquire ever so much, you can never know in what this sin consists. Much less can you ascertain whether *you* have committed it. But if you *could* ascertain it, this would do you no good. The conditions of salvation, and your

difficulty in complying with them, would still be the same. Why, then, will you spend your time in such unavailing inquiries. You do not know, and you cannot know, that you have committed the unpardonable sin. But there are other things that you *do* know. You know that, if you will "come to Christ," he will most certainly receive and save you: for he has most positively promised to do so. You know, too, that if you do *not* come to him for life, you must certainly perish. Then, why not act upon what you *do* know, and not upon what you do not and cannot know, by striving at once to enter into life?

There is not so much danger that the unpardonable sin will keep you out of heaven, as that your *fear* of it will do so. For, while you are giving way to this fear, you will not be striving to "enter in at the strait gate." And it is probable that Satan is filling your mind with this fear for the very purpose of keeping you from coming to Christ for salvation. Beware, then, how you let him "get an advantage of you,"

through "ignorance of his devices." — 2 Cor. 2: 11. But, while your fears are deterring you from coming to Christ, they should rather *encourage* you. It is generally thought by theologians, that when a man does commit the unpardonable sin, he is forsaken of the Spirit of God, and left to sink into utter stupidity and hardness of heart, respecting his spiritual state. And if so, your distress on the subject is rather an evidence that you have not committed that sin which "hath never forgiveness." What madness, then, to be kept by it from entering into life. Whether you have *yet* committed this sin or not, you *will* commit it, if you fail to exercise "repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." For there is no sin more ruinous than "the damning sin of unbelief." If you will not repent and believe, it matters but little whether or not you have already committed the "sin unto death;" for in either case, you will certainly perish. And since, if you but come to Christ, you will certainly be saved, why not resolve to do so, without delay?

“ Oh, make but trial of his love,
Experience shall decide,
That they are safe, and only they,
Who in his grace confide.”

And if more positive assurance is asked, that Christ will “ save *all* who come to God by him,” it is found in the divine declaration confirmed with an oath, and in the earnest expostulations with all the wicked, to come and be saved. “ *As I live*, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way and live ; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways ; for why will ye die ? ” — Ezek. 33 : 11. Accordingly, the apostle declares, “ The Lord is not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance.” — 2 Peter 3 : 9. If, then, any are lost, it will *not* be simply because they have committed the unpardonable sin, or because of any of the difficulties which have been discussed, in this discourse ; but because they failed to comply with the conditions of salvation.

SERMON XI.

THE TERROR OF THE LORD A PERSUASIVE TO SALVATION.

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."—Heb. 10: 31.

There is a sense in which all mankind are at all times in the hands of the Almighty. As Job expresses it, "In his hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind." As Paul expresses it, "In him we live, and move, and have our being." All men are in God's hands, as they are upheld by his power; and especially as they are under his authority, and entirely at his disposal. As he is their

Maker, Upholder and bountiful Benefactor, he has a right to all their services; and as all his requirements are not only reasonable, but benevolent — as “his law is holy, and his commandment holy, and just, and good,” they are bound in all things to obey him, and as they have failed to do so, he has a right at any time to consign them to the perdition which they have incurred by transgression. And as he has the *right*, so also has he the *power*. He is the Potter, and they are the clay; and, becoming displeased with them, he can “dash them in pieces, like a potter’s vessel.” They are held by his hand from dropping into the grave, and into the pit of woe. They lie on his hand: and he needs only to turn it over to let them into hell. And he has the right, not only to appoint our final destiny, but to order all our affairs in this life. All our enjoyments are blessings which He sends. All our privations and afflictions are of his appointing. Yea, there is a sense in which he orders all our conduct, however freely we put it forth. Said Solomon, “The king’s

heart, (and what can be freer than the heart of a king?) “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever he will.”

But there is a sense in which men are *out* of God’s hands. This is implied in the text. For they could not *fall into them*, if they were in them already. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” I propose to inquire,

1. In what respects men are out of God’s hands?

2. What is implied in their falling into his hands? and,

3. Why this is a “fearful thing?”

1. Men are out of God’s hands, in that he suffers them to go on in their own chosen way, not restraining them by his physical omnipotence. The father has power to keep his son from running away. But sometimes he sees fit to let him go. Or he has power to keep him back from doing certain mischiefs; yet sometimes sees fit to interpose no other hindrances than

prohibitions and threatenings. And so our Father in heaven has power to keep the sinner from transgression. But he sees fit to govern his moral beings by *moral*, and not *physical* power: by *suasion*, and not by *force*. He sees fit to let them resist his authority, and trample on his law, while he has power to prevent it. He can stop the sinner's ridicule, reproach and blasphemy, by stopping his breath. But he sees fit to let him "set his mouth against the heavens:" and "by his tongue," as with sword in hand, to "walk through the earth." He can stop the sinner's intemperance, debauchery and violence, by shutting him in the room of the invalid, or laying him in the grave. But he sees fit to give him strength and opportunity to commit all the crimes that redden and blacken the history of man.

As the wicked have gone into distant revolt from their rightful Sovereign, they act and feel as if they were entirely independent of his authority and power. They say, "With our tongues will we prevail; our lips are our own;

who is Lord over us?" They live as "without God in the world." They scorn the thought of obeying his word; and boast themselves in defiance of a coming retribution. Or, if they are not thus outrageous in their conduct, or impious in their language, they scorn, nevertheless, the very thought of acting out of regard to the will of God. Ask the most moral, and amiable, and refined of the impenitent, why they abstain from things that God has forbidden, and they will tell you, "Because it pleases their religious friends, or renders themselves more respectable," or some other *selfish* reason — in short, anything rather than "because God has forbidden it."

And while sinners are acting thus, He who sitteth in the heavens is looking down upon them. While they are setting his authority at naught, and defying his power, He is able to stop in a moment all their rebellion and blasphemy. Although he supplies the strength by which they work iniquity: yea, though He gives the very breath by which they utter their

contempt of him, He suffers them to go on in their own chosen way, just as if they were self-existent, and entirely independent of his authority and power. In other words, He treats them just as if they were *out of his hand*. But thus he will not deal with them forever. For alas! the time is coming, when they will "fall into the hands of the living God." We are to consider,

2. What is implied in thus falling? In the text, as in many other portions of Scripture, the word *fall* has a peculiar meaning. It does not denote, that sinners come by their own weight, or of their own accord, into the power of the Almighty. For all their desires and efforts are to get away from him. Neither does it denote, that they come there by accident, or without any power put forth to apprehend them. Falling denotes moral or natural evil. Here, it is the latter. In man's first transgression, he emphatically fell; fell into sin. So when he is finally punished for his sin, he emphatically falls: falls into the hands of the liv-

ing God, as a town or fortress is said to fall into the hands of a besieging force. And therefore it is said to be a fearful thing thus to fall.

The context clearly shows, that this relates to the doom of the finally impenitent. In the foregoing verses, it is said, "If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a *certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries*. He that despised Moses' law, *died without mercy*, under two or three witnesses: of how much *sorer punishment*, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, "*Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense*, saith the Lord;" and again, "the Lord shall judge his people." Then follows the text, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." To fall into his

hands, then, is to suffer all the evils just named: it is, to be finally judged of God, and to suffer the *vengeance* with which he will recompense the sinner. It is, to suffer the sore punishment which God will inflict upon those that have trodden under foot the Son of God, and done despite to the Spirit of grace. It is, to suffer the certain fearful judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour all the adversaries of the Almighty. Yes, to fall into the hands of the living God is to fall under that "indignation and wrath, that tribulation and anguish, which is revealed from heaven upon every soul of man that doeth evil."

Sinners, then, will fall into the hands of God when their probation closes, and their retribution commences. Then will he cease to leave them to their own way. Then he will no longer allow them to act and feel as if they were above his authority and power. Then he will take them in hand, and make them *feel* the grasp of his sovereignty, and the weight of his omnipotence. Then they will realize painfully, and

forever realize, what they now refuse to believe, or at least to remember, that they are at the disposal of a sin-hating God.

3. We have yet to inquire, *Why it is a fearful thing* thus to fall into the hands of the living God? *Fear* is the pain experienced in the expectation of evil. I suppose the meaning of the apostle to be, that the thought of falling under the power of a sin-avenging God should fill the sinner's mind in this life with painful apprehensions. I doubt not that a vast amount of fear will be felt *in the world of woe*: that all along the endless duration of the sinner's anguish, he will be looking forward, in fear of future and greater woes to come. Yet, I suppose that his then *present* sufferings will be the principal wretchedness of that dark abode. And I suppose the fearfulness spoken of in the text is that which the sinner *ought* to feel in the *present* life. It is the dread which the revelation of a judgment to come is fitted to awaken in his mind. As the context expresses it, it is the fearful *looking for* of judgment, and

the fiery indignation which threatens to devour him in the world to come. It is for the purpose of awaking this fear in the *present* world that these dangers are revealed unto men. It is, that they may take timely warning, and thus escape the punishment impending over them. For, never, till they have this fear, will they strive to escape the dangers awaiting them.

But this fear is what sinners are unwilling, most of all things, to feel. Satan avails himself of their most inconsistent and preposterous pride, to keep them from escaping from the wrath to come. He insinuates, and they readily assent to it, that there is something cowardly and base in escaping from wrath through fear of suffering it; and hence the mighty struggle within, to keep out the fear of hell, and to keep up a spirit of rashness, in contempt of the awful denunciations of God's holy law; and hence the frequent assertion of the blustering sinner, "I am not to be scared into religion." Do you see that man in a boat, on the mighty Niagara? A friend cries out to him, "You are in danger

of being swept over the falls; pull with all your might for the shofe!" But he answers, "Do you think I am such a weak and cowardly wretch as to be frightened into safety? and soon he plunges down the awful cataract, and is dashed in pieces on the rocks below. What think you of that man's conduct? I tell you it is the perfection of wisdom — yes, it is the perfection of wisdom, compared with his who braves the threatenings of God's final wrath.

My fellow sinners, I entreat you not to cling to a sentiment so pernicious. I beg of you to be mindful that the fear of the Lord is not folly, but "the beginning of wisdom." I entreat you, then, to listen with due attention, while I endeavor to show wherein it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God. For you are grievously mistaken, if you think it courageous and magnanimous to shut your eyes against your danger, or deny its existence. It is the perfection of weakness and cowardice. It is the part of genuine courage, to look danger firmly in the face, and then to consider and em-

ploy the best means of preventing or escaping it. It is thus that "discretion is the better part of valor." One reason why many sinners are unwilling to see and acknowledge their danger is, they have not courage to behold it. They act like the silly child that shuts its eyes to hide from danger. Go, stand on the rail-track, as the engine comes thundering along, with its breath of steam and mouth of fire. See if shutting your eyes will save you from the deadly contact. But for the question.

Why is it a fearful thing for sinners to fall into the hands of God?

1. Because it is so *unwelcome* to them. Sinners are unwilling to *feel* that they are at God's disposal. The language of their hearts is, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." They say, "We will not have this man to reign over us." It is this dislike that disposes them to dismiss all thoughts of God from their mind, and to deny all obligation to his service, all subjection to his power, and all exposure to his final wrath. How painful, then,

must be the thought which sometimes will flash into their minds, that the time is coming, when they will *feel* themselves in his hands — feel it *constantly* — feel it *forever*. If God should *now* make himself visibly present to them, their souls would be in awful trouble. How, then, will they bear the tokens of his presence, as he pours upon them the hot vials of his final wrath?

Impenitent sinners will carry into the eternal world the same self-will and rebellion which they have in this life. Suffering will not soften them. It will probably make them worse. While, through divine grace, the afflictions of the righteous are the means of their spiritual growth, the wicked seem to wax worse and worse, under what they suffer. So it was with the rebellious Jews, of whom the prophet inquired, “Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more.” That is, your punishment will only make you the worse. And so we find it eventuates with many in modern times. How often is loss of property followed by loss of principle, then loss of temperance,

then loss of character, then loss of all. Too often it happens, that the more the child feels the rod, the more he writhes in rebellion and wrath. So it is with public convicts. The State prison is a school of crime, not of morals. And so it is to be feared, that the damned in hell will only be excited by their sufferings to the more desperate hatred to the God that afflicts them. And though they are withheld from acts of rebellion, they will exercise the *spirit* of rebellion, and probably will utter the *language* of rebellion. Like those mentioned by the revelator, they will "blaspheme the God of heaven," because of their pains. And the more this hatred and rebellion of spirit increases, the more painful it will be to them to be held in the hand of the living God.

Sinner, have you ever thought of this? One thing you *have* thought. It is that the service of God on earth is intolerable bondage. How, then, will you endure imprisonment in hell? If you cannot bear to think yourself under the authority and power of God now, what will you

do, when, on feeling the grasp of Omnipotence, you will be compelled to "consider it perfectly." What will then avail all your present hatred and scorn of the divine authority, and what your boasted neglect of it? I will tell you. They will serve only to render it a more fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

It is true, that there is a way in which you can avoid all these sufferings: all you now suffer, and all you are in danger of suffering in the world to come. More. There is a way in which you can convert the dreaded sovereignty and omnipotence of God into sources of unspeakable blessedness, both in the present and in the eternal world. Would you like to do so? And do you ask, how so vast a benefit can be secured? I answer, it is simply by submitting voluntarily to that sovereignty, and by accepting pardon through Jesus Christ. Do this, and the sovereignty and omnipotence of God will at once be objects of love and joy; for they will then be enlisted for the promotion of your highest happiness, for time and eternity. Then,

why not take this short and easy way to a "joy unspeakable, and full of glory," in the present world, and in the world to come to "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?"

But I have another reason yet to give, why it is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God. It is so,

2. Because of the positive sufferings which he will then inflict on the rejectors of his saving grace. We have seen, that if he simply held them in the hand of his power, without smiting them at all with the rod of his wrath, they must suffer immensely from their own enmity and rebellion of heart. But he does inflict upon them a "much sorer punishment." There is such a thing as "eternal damnation." For Christ tells us of some who "have never forgiveness, but are in danger of eternal damnation:" a declaration which would not be true if, as some say, there is no endless punishment in store for the wicked. And the sufferings of this damnation must be inconceivably intense; for they are represented by the strongest im-

ages: by the gnawing of the worm that never dies, and the anguish of the fire that never shall be quenched. I need not insist that this language is literal, and I allow that some similar language of Scripture cannot be taken literally. Christ said, "The rich man also died and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and asked for a drop of water, to cool his tongue, because he was tormented in the flame." What is here said of *eyes* and *tongue*, of *water* and *flame*, cannot be literal. For according to the parable, the *body* of the rich man was not yet in hell, but lying in the grave. By the *worm* we may understand the *conscience* of sinners; by *fire*, the frown of God's wrath. And by these agencies, God may inflict anguish unspeakable upon the finally impenitent.

And what though that which the Bible reveals of God's raining upon the wicked fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; and of his casting them into a lake of fire and brimstone, is not to be understood literally? It has a fig-

urative and fearful meaning, of whose terrors no ridicule can divest it. How unavailing and how ungodly the attempt to disprove the torment of the finally impenitent, by calling the belief of it a sulphurous dogma. God has revealed their torments in his own language. And woe to those who attempt to laugh him out of it.

The power of an awakened conscience is often amazing.* Sometimes its convictions are so severe as to prostrate strength and health. And I ascribe it to the special interposition of God, that they do not more frequently eventuate in distraction and suicide.

Some insist, that condemnation of conscience is *all* the hell which the sinner suffers. But what if we should allow this assumption? It

* But what is conscience? It is not a *law-giver*, as many suppose, but a *judge*. It does not teach us what we ought to do; but it is seated in the court of our hearts, to decide on our own conduct, according to *law* and *testimony*. Its law is that of nature and revelation. Rom. 2: 14. And its testimony is that of consciousness. It sometimes makes erroneous decisions. But this is owing only to its misunderstanding of the law; for as to the testimony, its understanding is unerring. And when its apprehension of the law is correct, as in the main it generally is, its decisions are infallible. And when it does condemn, its inflictions are often very severe.

would not follow, as they seem to suppose, that all its convictions and pains are suffered in this world. It is evident that men do not suffer in this life in proportion to the crimes they commit. The consciences of the most of sinners become more or less "seared as with a hot iron." The more wicked their hearts become, the more *hardened* they grow. Doubtless the murderer feels more horror at his first deed of blood than at the scores that he commits afterwards. But God can quicken these dead consciences in the world of woe, and make them the means of inconceivable anguish forevermore.

Yet still greater anguish may be inflicted on the spirits of the damned, by the frown of his wrath. What a deep wound is sometimes inflicted on the spirit of a child, by the mere look of parental displeasure. He cannot rest till the frown is removed from the father's brow. And how much greater agony may be inflicted by the withering look of an ever-present, ever-angry God. We need not inquire how God reaches the sensibilities of sinners in the world of spirits.

It is enough for us to know, that the Almighty, "with whom all things are possible," can inflict on their disembodied spirits all the agony, all the horror, all the woe that are said to be the portion of those that "dwell with devouring fire, and lie down in everlasting burnings." ¶

I do not say that the condemnations of conscience within, and the frowns of divine indignation from without, are *all* the inflictions which the sinner will experience in the world of woe. But I say that these are sufficient to make it emphatically "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

You see, my impenitent hearers, that evils are before you; evils awful, evils eternal. You see you must make provision against them *now*, or suffer them *forever*. To despise or disregard them is madness. For the longer you do so, the more you increase the evils and the probability that you will finally and forever endure them.

I have not presented this subject for the purpose of taunting you; much less for the purpose of "tormenting you before your time;" but for

the purpose of saving you from the present and endless suffering to which I see you exposed. Is the subject a painful one? Believe me, all the pain that I occasion I would willingly endure for you, if I could thus deliver you from the everlasting agonies of the second death.

I would not address myself to your excited feelings, but to your sober, candid judgment; and ask you to act wisely for yourselves. I ask not only is it *right*, but is it *expedient* and best for *yourselves*, to trifle with the wrath of God any longer? Have you not "treasured up wrath against the day of wrath" long enough? Is it best for you to make your salvation more difficult, and thus your damnation more sure and dreadful? Will you not *now* be wise for yourselves, in submitting at once to the sovereignty and the saving grace of God? Will you not drop, forthwith, into the embrace of his mercy, that instead of dragging you down to hell, he may lift you up to heaven, and set you among "the saints in light?"

SERMON XII.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD A PERSUASIVE TO SALVATION.

“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.” — Rom. 2: 4.

This is not the language of inquiry, but of remonstrance. In these words, Paul is remonstrating with the sinner, respecting his rebellion against God, while sharing so largely his goodness and his grace. The repentance of which he speaks is an effectual resolution to turn from sin to holiness; eventuating in eternal life. In saying, “the goodness of God leadeth to re-

pentance," the apostle could not mean that this goodness always does secure this saving grace: for this is contradicted by the history of mankind at large, and by his own statement respecting the sinner to whom he is here speaking. For he declares him in the context to be in the *impenitency* and hardness of his heart, "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath." He could only mean to say, then, that the goodness of God furnishes strong obligations and inducements to repentance. It is, therefore, the evident doctrine of the text, that *The goodness of God should persuade men to repentance.* And this will be the theme of our present discourse.

There is no need of a labored argument to confirm this doctrine. Besides being written in the text, it is written in most legible characters on the moral constitution of man. We see, as by intuition, that favor confers obligation: making it the duty of the benefitted party to comply with the reasonable wishes of the benefactor: and that, where there was a pre-

vious obligation, favor increases it. And such is the sinner's increased obligation to obey the commands of God. It evidently and irresistibly follows, then, that as he has hitherto disobeyed them, he is bound to resolve that he will forthwith forsake his transgressions and live ever after in obedience to them : and the more so on account of the many and munificent blessings which he is constantly receiving.

The ingratitude of man toward man is branded by all, as base and atrocious ; especially the ingratitude of requiting benefits by abuse : and much more so if the benefits are still continued and still abused. How amazing, therefore, the atrocity of abusing by a life of transgression, the rich, the numberless, and the long-continued blessings of our infinite Benefactor, God. How evident, then, that the goodness of God should lead us to that "repentance which is unto life."

What need is there, then, of laboring to prove by assertions of Scripture, or deductions of reason, a truth which my hearers cannot but see and acknowledge? My object, therefore, will

not be *proof*, but *persuasion*. For many there are who confess this solemn truth, yet do not obey it. And my aim will be to move such to repentance, by exhibiting some of the many and amazing blessings which God is bestowing upon them.

I am well aware that the most of sinners feel a strong aversion to the arguments of terror. And this makes it very painful to the ministers of reconciliation to employ them. For one, I never would press them, if I did not know that the impenitent needed to be "persuaded" by "the terror of the Lord," as well as won by "the tender mercy of our God." It is necessary that they "behold," not only "the goodness," but "the severity of God." They ought, therefore, to *welcome* such needful arguments. But though they will be ever so impatient and restive, under the persuasions that are drawn from the righteousness and wrath of God, it surely may be expected, that they will listen with readiness and candor to those that are drawn from his goodness and his grace. My

impenitent hearers, may I not hope for such attention from you while I tell you of the love and mercy of your God ?

Some suppose that the goodness of God includes not only his benevolence and grace, but his holiness, righteousness and truth : and, in short, all the attributes which help to make up the perfection of his character. And truly, in this understanding of the word, *God is good*. He is the *better* for being not only bountiful, and gracious, and long-suffering, but for being holy and righteous, just and true. Yet, in the text, as in other portions of his Word, the *goodness* of God is spoken of in distinction from his other and more awful attributes. In the text, too, his goodness is associated with his long-sufferance, in evident distinction from his penal justice and wrath. We will now consider this divine goodness, as manifested in four things, viz :

In delaying long the punishment due to sin :

In bestowing great temporal blessings upon transgressors :

In providing and offering salvation through Christ. And,

In continuing to urge the offers of salvation, after they have been long and contemptuously rejected.

1. In delaying long the punishment due to sin. By his first transgression, the sinner has fallen under the sentence of temporal and eternal death. And justice demands its immediate execution. Therefore, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." Did he deal with us as his unappeased justice requires, he would consign, at once, our bodies to the dust, and our souls to the pit of endless perdition. But, in his long-suffering and forbearance, he has been delaying to take the vengeance due — delaying it for many months, for many years: delaying it, while the rebels thus spared have been living on in the constant repetition of the transgressions by which they first incurred the sentence of death and woe. He spares them, though they are doing more and more every hour to provoke his hot displeasure.

Such, my impenitent friends, is the goodness of God to *you*. He gives you life, while you deserve death and woe. He prolongs that life, while you are employing it in continued rebellion against him. He gives the breath by which you reproach his cause and profane his name ; and supplies the vigor of that arm which you raise in rebellion against him. What a strange forbearance and mercy, then, that when you open your mouth to trifle with his character and name, or to sport with his offers of salvation, he does not seal it in the silence of the grave, and that, when you raise your arm against his government and grace, he does not smite it with the palsy of death.

Herein you see the riches of his goodness. And you know full well how it *ought* to affect you. You know it *should* dissolve the hardness of your hearts, and melt you into penitential sorrow for your past sins, and prompt you to the purpose of forsaking them forever. Are you thus affected ? Or, is your heart, on the contrary, “ more fully set in you to do evil, be-

cause sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily?" If the forbearance and long-suffering of God will not soften your hearts, what hope is there that anything will do it? and especially if, instead of melting to penitence, they only confirm you in continued and increased rebellion?

2. The goodness of God consists in *bestowing upon transgressors many temporal blessings*. His power is constantly exerted in sustaining their forfeited lives, in continuing or restoring their health, and in constantly and richly supplying their numerous wants. He maintains, by the constant exertion of his power, the action of their lungs, the circulation of their blood, and all the mysterious movements of this curious, and complex, and delicate engine, the body. It is he who makes their food nourishing and their clothing warm. And it is because he gives them sunshine and showers, and maintains the laws of vegetable and animal life, that they *have* their food and clothing. "He that formed the ear," gives all the delights of sound. "He

that formed the eye," gives all the charms of vision. He that is "the Father of spirits," sustains all their intellectual and moral powers in sane and successful operation, thus giving them all their *mental* enjoyments. In short, all their possessions and pleasures are the gifts of God. And he is dealing them out, while they, instead of them, are deserving indignation and wrath. They deserve that all the power employed in doing them good should be employed in causing them pain of body and anguish of mind. Moreover, he is continuing these blessings, while they are continuing their transgressions; nay, while they are waxing worse and worse; and thus are calling louder and louder for his restrained and struggling indignation to break forth upon them. And it is this grievous ingratitude, this continued rebellion, in contempt of his rich and numerous blessings, that he calls the heavens and earth to notice with astonishment, saying, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."

Now consider, my fellow sinners, how base must be their ingratitude, and how hardened in rebellion must those be who can requite such goodness with continued and more aggravated transgressions. And is not this the very thing which *you* are now doing? You *know* how it is. And, if indeed you are doing it, you are treating the great and terrible God as you could not bear to see one neighbor treat another, without exclaiming, Scandalous! Insufferable! Horrid! And will you, can you pursue such a course any longer? No: let a sight of God's goodness, forbearance and long-suffering lead you at once to repentance.

3. Much more does the goodness of God consist in *providing* and *offering* salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only does he spare the wicked from day to day, but he offers, on condition of their repentance, to spare them forever. And not only does he bestow upon them many *temporal* blessings, but he offers, on the same condition, to bestow upon them the infinite blessedness of the life forevermore.

This goodness is manifested both in *providing* and in *offering* this salvation.

The necessary provision for saving sinners was secured by the death of Christ to satisfy that justice of God by which they are doomed to eternal death. Justice required that this suffering should be inflicted on sinners themselves, or an adequate one on some *substitute*. And God has accepted his Son as a substitute, who has borne our sins in his own body on the tree; thus making it consistent with his justice for God to release transgressors from condemnation: so "that he might be *just*, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Mighty and mysterious was that event which provided salvation for fallen man. And well might it wake the wonder of a moral universe. "Great," indeed, "was the mystery of godliness," for it was "God manifested in the flesh." It was God coming from heaven. It was God wrapping himself in humanity, to bear in it the sins of a revolted world. So great is this mystery that well might "the angels desire to look

into it." And well might the apostle exclaim respecting it, "Oh the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God."

Let us ponder awhile this glorious mystery of redeeming love. Look at the Son of God as seated in "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was." "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." He is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." He is "the blessed and only potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords." All the holy angels worship him, and all the universe is under his control. Look at him—look and adore.

You have now seen him as the Sovereign of the universe; see him next the babe of Bethlehem. You have seen him seated in robes of light, on a throne of infinite glory; see him next in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. You have seen him "in the form of God, and without robbery equal with God." Now we see him "in the form of a servant, and so poor that he had not where to lay his head. You

have contemplated him as the centre and source of the happiness of heaven. Now behold him, as in the garden of Gethsemane, he is offering up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears;" being in such agony that "his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." You have just beheld him with his legions of angels adoring at his feet, or flying as flaming fires, to execute his will — more than twelve legions of them subject to his call. But now behold him, seized by a ruthless band and hurried to the court of Caiphas, where he is unrighteously condemned, buffeted and spit upon. See him also at Pilate's bar, where he is mocked with a scarlet robe and crown of thorns. Hear, too, the outcries of the priests and the populace, for his crucifixion. And, finally, behold him dying a most painful and ignominious death, amidst the darkness and convulsions of astonished nature.

My fellow sinners, all this humiliation and sufferings were borne for *you*, that you might be delivered from endless shame and sorrow.

How loud, then, the voice from Calvary, that calls you to repentance. As you look upon these sufferings of the Son of God — sufferings which the sun refused to look upon — and reflect that your sins occasioned them, can you persist in transgression, thus continuing to “crucify the Son of God afresh?” If you can do so, must not your hearts be hardened to very desperation? For, if a sight of your Savior’s sufferings will not soften them, what is there in the universe that can?

But in “the love of the Father,” in giving his Son, and in the grace of his Son, in giving himself to die for sinners, let us not overlook the forgiving grace of God. Christ did not die to make it binding on God to pardon. It was to make it *possible*: in other words, consistent with his justice. And now that Christ has died, God is under no obligation to forgive and save sinners *on that account*; but only on account of his own free *offer* and *promise*. He manifests, therefore, great goodness and grace, in offering and promising salvation to all who will repent

and believe. And this should be an additional and powerful inducement to repentance; especially as compliance brings eternal life, and refusal eternal death. For though God is "gracious and merciful, long-suffering and abundant in goodness—forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin—he will by no means clear" the finally impenitent. Sinner, if you break through such influences, will you not press your way to hell over all other obstacles?

Lastly, God manifests his goodness in *continuing to urge the offers of salvation, after they have been long and contemptuously refused*. If, after providing, at infinite expense, this great salvation, he had made but one offer of it to the impenitent, that *one* offer would be amazing grace. That one offer should be enough. And when it is once deliberately and willfully refused, how wonderful that it should ever be repeated. But such is "the goodness and forbearance, and *long-suffering* of God, that he is continually repeating it, although it is always rejected, and often with contempt and scorn. Surely, it is

because he is "God and not man," that such despisers of his mercy are not at once "consumed." And how wonderful, that he continues this offer for many long years, to those who not only spurn it, but who rebel against him more and more.

And much more is this goodness manifested in the earnestness with which the deliverance from wrath is urged upon the refusing sinner. Loudly does he knock at the door of the impenitent, "till his head is filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night." He assures them that he deplores their destruction, and desires their deliverance. "Have I any pleasure at all, that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his way and live?" "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" is his earnest remonstrance. And when, by their persevering and obstinate refusal, they make it necessary for him to consign them to perdition, he does it with affecting reluctance, saying, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver

thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me. My repentings are kindled together." By his ministering servants he addresses them in the language of earnest, humble supplication. Said the apostle, "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ: as though God did *beseech* you by us, we *pray* you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Yes, that God who spoke the universe from nothing, and governs the numberless worlds he has made: that God who "looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: who toucheth the hills, and they smoke:" and at whose coming, "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat:" that great and glorious God comes down to his rebellious subjects, in the language of earnest and humble supplication, begging them to "turn and live." In short, he manifests that amazing compassion which ought to melt a heart of adamant. My fellow sinners, has it melted yours? Or are they so hard that nothing can melt them,

but the fire that never shall be quenched?
No: no: let it not be so.

Look once more at the riches of God's goodness, that should lead you to repentance. Think again, how long, with one hand, he has been holding back the sword of justice, while with the other, he has been loading you with the riches of his temporal blessings; instead of which you have deserved immediate death and woe. Think what humiliation and ignominy the Son of God has suffered, that you might be saved from "shame and everlasting contempt:" and what anguish he endured in Gethsemane and on Calvary, that you might be kept from the everlasting agonies of the *second death*. See him in the garden sorrowing unto death, and sweating drops of blood. Behold him on the cross, and hear those dying outcries which hung the heavens with mourning, and caused the earth to quake in consternation. And think again of the amazing grace of God, in offering a salvation so costly: especially in plying the offer so long and so earnestly, while it is

incessantly rejected with enmity and scorn. Think, that in all your long wanderings in the ways of sin, Christ has been following you with all the interest with which the shepherd would seek in the wilderness the lost sheep of his fold. Oh think, too, with what joy he would greet your return, and call for songs of gladness from the millions that surround his throne.

And now I ask, in conclusion, whether your spirits are so base, your hearts so hard, and your love of sin so strong that this view of God's goodness, forbearance and long-suffering will not lead you to repentance? If it will not, must not an intelligent universe decide that your "damnation is emphatically just?" Nay, must they not see it to be peculiarly fit and proper, that you, who have so long despised salvation, and have so long and so grievously abused the goodness and grace of its Author, should suffer a *signal* retribution. But again, I beg of you to repent without delay, and thus to escape from a doom so deplorable.

SERMON XIII.

THE GAINS OF GODLINESS IN THE PRESENT AND FUTURE WORLDS.

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."—1 Tim. 4: 8.

From the origin of the word, and from its use in the New Testament, we learn that *godliness* signifies the worship and service of God: in other words, the exercise and practice of the Christian religion. The text declares, then, that Christianity is "*profitable unto all things;*" that is, extensively, or in many respects, profitable; and profitable as regards both the present and the future life.

But this is a truth which the impenitent are very much inclined to disbelieve. And, thinking religion will prevent their present prosperity and happiness, they resolve to postpone it yet longer, whereby many of them are lost forever. It is important, therefore, to show plainly that vast good will result from practical godliness, both in "the life that now is, and that which is to come." As we have said, sinners are very averse to seeing their exposure to the righteous wrath of God; consequently, they are unwilling to be "persuaded by the terrors of the law," to make their escape. Nay, they are unwilling that even "the goodness of God should lead them to repentance." But much more unreasonable must they be, if they refuse to be convinced that religion would greatly promote their welfare in the present life, as well as secure them eternal happiness in the life which is to come. May I not hope, then, a candid hearing, while I attempt to show *some of the many ways in which religion promotes the present and future welfare of those who embrace it?*

1. Godliness is profitable for *this life*. Though many regard it as interfering with their pleasures, profits and honors, it will be found to promote them all. It promotes, not so much the gratification of our animal natures, as the higher pleasures of the understanding and heart. It is employed on most interesting themes—themes of the utmost sublimity and beauty—thus affording the noblest and richest enjoyments. As the ancient heathen philosophers considered mental and moral philosophy to be superior to natural science, so should all others. But Christianity infinitely transcends, in beauty, grandeur and glory, all the heathen systems of religion and morals. And it not only affords a high enjoyment to minds already refined and elevated, but it tends to fit others for the like enjoyment. It tends to enlighten and refine, enlarge and elevate. This is evident, not only from its nature, but from its history. Such have been its results wherever it has gone. What were our ancestors, before they received the Bible? Savage, ignorant and stupid idol-

aters. It is the *Bible*, and not our Saxon blood, that has made us what we are. It is the Bible that has elevated all the enlightened nations of the day. And the more they are Christianized, the more elevated and refined they have become. Follow the foreign missionary, and see to how many savage and benighted nations he has given, with the Gospel, a literature and a moral elevation. How much, then, will the Gospel have effected, when the knowledge of "the Lord shall cover the earth!" And how much mental enjoyment will it then impart!

But far greater the enjoyment which religion administers to the *heart*. While a great share of mankind regard it as a cheerless, gloomy concern, it gives such a delight as the sinner never has, and never can enjoy: for even under sore trials, the saint "rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory." — 1 Peter 1: 8. True, it administers at first, much distress and sorrow. But these are only the unpleasant medicines that bring health and happiness. True, it for-

bids many sinful pleasures. But these are such as in the end occasion more sorrow than joy : while it gives in their stead, others more satisfactory and enduring. True, too, that these pleasures are never tasted by the impenitent. But it is because their impenitence prevents it. Yet these can see that the real Christian does enjoy them ; and is thereby more happy than he was before he became a Christian. We see, also, from their nature, that religious affections are pleasant, while sinful ones are painful. It must, however, be confessed, that many professors manifest but little enjoyment in religion. They seem, rather to *endure* religion than to *enjoy* it. But this is not owing to its insufficiency to afford such enjoyment, but to their own imperfection. If they had more practical godliness, they would find more satisfaction in it. And some, from mistaken views of humility, are concealing their joy, while they ought to let their light shine for the encouragement of others.

But godliness is profitable to no small extent,

in the consolation and support which it affords to the sorrowful and the suffering, and in preventing the perplexities, pains and fears incident to a sinful course. Many and severe are the afflictions of life; and not a few would sink under them, if it were not for their trust in God to sustain and deliver them, and for their triumphant hope of a blessed immortality. Often has religion made the season of sharpest suffering [the season of their greatest joy. From many a perplexity and pain does religion deliver, by preventing the sins and follies which would have occasioned them. But far greater is its benefit in quelling the fears of final wrath. As nothing is so distressing as despair, so nothing is so delightful as an undoubting hope of eternal life.

Again, religion promotes *wealth*. Although we are not to labor first and mainly for the meat that perisheth, nor to set our main affections on things on the earth, yet we need for our comfort, some share of the good things of this life. And though we should not be anxious to be

very rich, we should seek a competency. And religion ministers to that competency. It is among the wicked that are found the most of our wretched poor. It is our vices, and not our virtues, that eat up our possessions, or prevent their increase. Religion promotes industry and economy, thus preventing unthrifty indolence and wasting extravagance. And thus it will be generally found, that a greater share of the righteous than of the wicked are in easy and prosperous circumstances. They have the promise, moreover, that if they "seek first the kingdom of heaven," they shall have all the earthly good they need. — Matt. 6: 33.

Yet again, religion promotes our *respectability and honor*. And although we are not to seek so much the honor that comes from man as that which comes from God only, we should avoid what is disgraceful, and seek the esteem of our fellow men. For "a good name is better than great riches." Nor will an upright Christian life prevent, but promote our reputation. Many affect to despise the Christian

But none *can* do so, unless they are so ignorant or debased that their good opinion is little worth. It is vice, not virtue, that degrades a man. "Sin is a reproach to any people."

"Vice is a monster of so foul a mien,
"That, to be hated, needs but to be seen."

While truth and honesty, purity and benevolence, candor and humility, with all other virtues which follow in the train of religion, are truly ennobling. And, if religion were not honorable, we should have no hypocrites.

Furthermore, godliness is profitable, as it promotes our *usefulness*. Christianity is a religion of love. It installs benevolence in the place of selfishness. It carries out our views beyond ourselves, and beyond our family to our country, to the whole world. It awakes our interest and efforts for the whole human family, especially for those that are most within the reach of our influence. "And it is more blessed to give than to receive." Benevolence, therefore, blesses the benefactor more than the

beneficiary — blesses him “in his deed,” in his after reflection, and in his final reward. We are not happy in proportion to our wealth, learning and fame; nor as we indulge in ease and pleasure. But we can make these things great blessings to others, and thus to ourselves. And the only way in which we can make our own wealth and talents truly subservient to our own happiness is in doing good to our fellow men.

Thus we see that in many ways and to a vast extent, godliness is profitable to us in the *present* life. So that it would be wise to be godly, *if* there were no life to come. It follows, then, that we should embrace religion without delay. For the sooner we begin its exercise and practice, the sooner we shall begin to be truly happy. What egregious folly, then, to delay religion for fear that it will prevent our present enjoyment. Yet how many are doing so, while their duty and their safety not only, but their present welfare, requires them to repent without delay.

2. Godliness is profitable as regards the *life to come*. We have seen that great are the present evils from which religion delivers us, and great the benefits which it secures us in this life. But we shall see that infinitely greater are the evils prevented and the good secured by it in the life to come. The wretchedness and bliss of the future world are intense and eternal. Who can estimate the woe produced by the worm of conscience that never dies, and the fire of divine wrath that shall never be quenched?

I have said, if there were no hereafter, it would be wise to embrace religion without delay, because of the evils it prevents, and the happiness it brings, in the present life. And I now say, if it had no "promise of the life that now is," but would produce as much unhappiness as the most of sinners suppose, it would still be infinitely wise to embrace it without delay. As the eternal happiness and woe of the world to come will infinitely exceed the utmost pleasures and suffering of this life, it

would be unspeakably wiser to embrace religion early, and to spend a long life in the utmost gloom and wretchedness, which piety is ever supposed to bring, rather than revel now in the utmost pleasure which sin can yield, at the risk of losing the soul, and of "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

So judge those heathen who voluntarily endure most painful tortures, with the vain hope of thereby securing a happy hereafter. And they would be wise in so doing, if these means were necessary and effectual. But how much wiser to secure salvation by faith in the sufferings of Him who "bore our sins in his own body on the tree!" — and to do it *now*, lest we "suddenly perish, and that without remedy?" For life is uncertain. "We know not what a day may bring forth." We should, therefore, "agree with our adversary quickly, whilst we are in the way with him, lest at *any time* our adversary deliver us to the judge — and we be cast into prison." Even if godliness were as fraught with wretchedness as sinners suppose,

it would be wise to embrace it for the sake of its safety. The sinner that is not hopelessly hardened, must often be agitated with most painful fears of a coming wrath. What a blessed religion is that, then, which will secure him against them — which will make him triumphant over his last enemy, and enable him to say, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” While to the wicked, the hour of death is most dismal and agonizing, to the Christian it is most happy and triumphant. For to him it is heaven begun.

But there are other gains than that of safety. Although the rewards of the saint are reckoned not of debt, but of grace, yet they are *apportioned* to the amount of his service. Those, then, who serve God longest and most faithfully, will have the highest reward. Martyrs will evidently have a brighter crown than those who have suffered but little in the cause of Christ. And each saint will doubtless be re-

warded according to the amount not only of his *suffering*, but of his *service*. The servant whose pound gained ten pounds was to govern ten cities, while the one whose pound gained but five pounds was to govern five cities. — Luke 19: 16–19. And the promise of Christ is, that if we benefit those who cannot recompense us in this life, we shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. We are also told, that those who build with hay, wood and stubble, shall be saved themselves, but shall suffer loss. It is, then, evident, that God rewards men not only according to the *character* of their works, whether good or bad, but according to the *amount* of them. The sooner, then, we turn to God, the longer time we shall have for “laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come.” And how much better to increase our treasures in heaven than those which we have on earth; since the latter must perish so soon, and the others will endure forever. We seem to think it important to add to our stores on earth, that we may render our

condition more pleasant, and provide for sickness and old age. But how much more important to secure a place in the "house of many mansions," and to render our eternal abode in it as delightful as possible. And though, as we have seen, the increase of our earthly treasures does not of itself increase our present happiness, yet the more treasure we lay up in heaven, the more benefit we derive from our treasures on earth. By seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, we secure the promise that all needful things will be given us. And though the amount of our possessions may be small, our enjoyment of them will be great, in proportion to our piety. It is therefore said, that "a little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." — Ps. 37: 16.

Thus we find it to be emphatically true, that "Godliness, with contentment, is *great gain*." — 1 Tim. 6: 6. What amazing folly, then, to neglect the "one thing needful," and to run the risk of losing the infinite joys of heaven,

and of enduring the endless sorrows of perdition, merely to chase after the possessions, pleasures and honors of earth; especially as they are so uncertain of attainment and continuance. On the contrary, how wise to accept salvation without delay, and to spend all our lives faithfully in his service, since, if we do so, "all things will work together for good," both on earth and in heaven.

It must be evident to all, that the most needful and important work of life is the one that should have our first and chief attention. And that godliness which involves the salvation of the soul must be emphatically the "one thing needful." It is *needful*, as it induces the *faith* and *repentance* without which none can be forgiven, and the "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." And it is *important* in proportion to the greatness of the salvation which it involves — a salvation of infinite moment, on account of the evils from which it delivers, and of the blessings which it secures. Now, the sufferings of the lost must be great,

though they consisted only in shame and remorse for past transgressions, and in the pain inflicted by the eternal frown of an angry God. No pains surpass the sufferings of a fully awakened conscience. We learn from the strong language in which the Scriptures express the suffering of the lost, that it must be intense and awful. They represent it as "a resurrection to shame and everlasting contempt." — Dan. 12 : 2 — as being "in hell in torments." — Luke 16 : 23 — and as being "tormented with fire and brimstone." — Rev. 14 : 10. Many make themselves merry in scoffing at this language, forgetting, I suspect, that it is the language of the great God himself; therefore, that such merriment is impious and blasphemous. This language, though figurative, is intensive in its meaning, and must represent the punishment of those who are lost to be very great. Although the miseries of all who perish will not be equally severe, but will be apportioned to the sinfulness of each, and no one will suffer more than his sins deserve, yet the sufferings

of all will be *eternal*. For, the punishment into which they are banished is an "*everlasting* punishment." — Mat. 25: 46. The destruction which they suffer is an "*everlasting* destruction." — 2 Thess. 1: 9. The vengeance that overtakes them is "the vengeance of *eternal* fire." — Jude 7. All the impenitent, therefore, "are in danger of *eternal* damnation." — Mark 3: 29. How great, then, the salvation that delivers from this deep and endless woe.

It is also great on account of the happiness which it secures. In heaven, there shall be neither hunger or thirst, pain or sorrow. — Rev. 7: 16; 21: 4. It is a place where is fullness of joy, and pleasures forevermore. — Ps. 16: 11 — a place of "exceeding joy." — 1 Peter 4: 13; and Jude 24: a joy exceeding anything which man has felt or conceived; for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart the things that God hath prepared for them that love him." — 1 Cor. 2: 9. Elsewhere, Paul expresses it as "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. — 2 Cor. 4:

17. But it is enough to know that it will fulfill the desires of every saint; so that each one may say with the Psalmist, "I shall be *satisfied*, when I awake in thy likeness." Ps. 17: 15. How great, then, the salvation that delivers from so much misery, and leads to so much bliss.

My fellow sinners, I have presented these thoughts to you for the purpose of persuading you to secure salvation without delay. I might urge you, as is often done, by the consideration of *danger*. But I prefer now to urge you only by the consideration of *gain* — gain both in the *present* and the *future* life. I do so, because it is seldom urged, while many stand in need of it. Multitudes, and *you* probably among the rest, are postponing religion for fear that it will prevent their present happiness, while it would greatly promote it. It is, therefore, of vast importance, that their error should be corrected. Then, will you not lay the subject to heart? I fear you are not willing to be convinced of your dangerous error, by the argu-

ments that have now been presented. But I beg of you to look at them with more candor and attention. Even if your notion were true, it will do you no harm to examine it more thoroughly. But ah! if it be *false*, how great your danger, and folly and guilt, in refusing to be convinced of it. How can you endure to reflect forever, that you have lost an eternity of bliss, and incurred an eternity of woe, because you feared religion would hinder your happiness on earth, while you have learned, too late, that it would have made you far *more* happy, both on earth and in heaven?

You have seen many a passage of God's holy Word which teaches you that godliness would make you far more happy than you could be in the way of sin. And while professing to believe the Bible, will you still deny these, its plain declarations? When it tells you "the way of the transgressor is hard," and that "the wicked are like the troubled sea, that cannot rest;" and when it tells you, on the other hand, that "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and

all her paths are peace," and that the righteous are called upon to "rejoice without ceasing," and "evermore:" yea, to "rejoice and be exceeding glad," and that they actually do so, with joy unspeakable, will you practically deny all these declarations, both breaking God's laws and "making him a liar?" Pause for a moment, I beseech you, in this impious and perilous path. Pause and think.

Why do you insist that religion would prevent your present happiness? Do you say you know it to be so from your own *experience*? You have *no* experience of *religion*. You have never had one religious feeling, nor performed aright one Christian duty. To know, from experience, the true effect of Christianity, you must become Christians *yourselves*. In other words, you must undergo a radical change of heart. And that would cause you to have and enjoy most of all that which awakened in you previously most aversion and distress. And this is aptly illustrated by the restoration of the body to health. To the sick man, wholesome and palatable food

is most disgusting and distressing. But when restored to health, this same food becomes his delight. And *you* are diseased with the worst of maladies—sick unto death. And consequently you loathe “the bread that comes down from heaven,” and “that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.” But if the great Physician should lay his healing hand on you, you would love it, and delight in it above all things earthly. Then you would say with the Psalmist, that the Bible is “more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb.” Then you would say with the Apostle, “I *delight* in the law of God after the inward man.” And then the *day* and *worship* of God, now so dreary, would be your great delight. In short, you would find far greater enjoyment in the service of God, than you ever found before in the pleasures of sin.

And the truth of this you can learn, not only from the word of God, but from your own *observation*. You should have learned it already.

Have you not known some who once delighted in nothing but folly, worldliness and sin; and who had a perfect aversion to religion? Yet, have you not seen them turn right about to serve God as earnestly as they did the riches, pleasures and honors of earth before? Yes, and they tell you they are far more happy in the ways of godliness than they were in the ways of sin. Are they ignorant, or deluded by enthusiasm? No: they are as intelligent and well-balanced as any of the impenitent. Are they, then, dishonest? No: you would take their word on any other subject as soon as that of any other man. Yes: and you might know they were more happy than before, though they had never told you so. For they show it in their looks and actions. And on looking around, you will find, that in general, Christians are, to say the least, quite as happy as those who shun religion, in order to be happy in this world. Once they thought, as you have done, that religion would rob them of enjoyment in life. But experience has taught them their mistake.

Let it teach you the same. You are called upon to "*taste and see that the Lord is good.*" And surely the experiment is safe. For, if you find by experience, that religion hinders your happiness, you are not obliged to continue in it.

Think, too, how *irrational* is the notion that religion would render you unhappy. Is it reasonable to suppose that God, who is the giver of "every good and perfect gift," would make his enemies happy while rebelling against him, and his friends wretched while faithful in his service? Can those who rejoice in the hope of "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" be more unhappy than those who are under the sentence of eternal death and woe? Can the "fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance," make men more wretched than wrath, malice, envy, revenge, impatience, rebellion of heart, and the like sinful passions? No: you are aware that the former class are pleasant, while the other are very painful. Again, if religious affections,

few and faint as they are in this life, would make you unhappy, how intensely wretched would they make you in heaven, where they will be in constant and perfect exercise. Why not dread going to heaven, then, above all other things? And if all your happiness is in sin, why not "dig into hell," where you can enjoy the pleasures of sin in its fullness?

No: my fellow sinners, if you consider this subject candidly, you must be fully convinced that religion would greatly *increase*, instead of preventing your happiness in this world, as well as secure to you an eternity of blessedness in the world to come. If, then, you would be "wise for yourselves," you should resolve to seek salvation without delay.

SERMON XIV.

WHY SALVATION IS PROVIDED FOR AND OFFERED TO THE PERISHING SINNER.

“Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?” — Prov. 17: 16.

In this passage, the word wisdom is evidently used in a *moral*, and not in its *intellectual* sense. It denotes *true religion*. The propriety of this use of the word is emphatic. The practice of religion is the perfection of wisdom. For it attains the best of ends by the best of means; than which nothing can be wiser. It secures

eternal life: and this is the highest good of man. It secures it, moreover, by the best means possible; for it does it by the *only* means possible. And as such is the wisdom mentioned in the text, its inquiry must be, "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get religion," and thus eternal life?

And if the word "wisdom" means religion, then folly must mean *irreligion*, or sin. Consequently, the correlative term "fool," in the text, must signify the sinner, or the impenitent, irreligious man. And thus the question of the text is, "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a sinner to become a Christian," and thus secure salvation?"

Again, the word translated "price" in the text, signifies *possessions* or *riches*. And it is here used figuratively, to signify the opportunity and means of securing salvation. As one frequent way of procuring what we need is *purchase*, the Scriptures use this word repeatedly, to express metaphorically the procurement of salvation. "*Buy* the truth and sell it

not." "Come buy wine and milk, without money and without price."

In this use of the word, the price of a thing is that sacrifice or effort by which it can be obtained. Sometimes it is *self-denial*, as in the case of health. And we say, a man will not *pay the price* of health, because he will not deny his appetites and passions enough to secure it. Sometimes it is attention and toil, as in the acquisition of learning, reputation or wealth. And we say men remain in ignorance, obscurity and want, merely because they will not *pay* the attention, or *expend* the energy which deliverance from these evils would *cost*. And thus the "price" mentioned in the text is that by which spiritual wisdom is obtained.

But it does not here mean *an equivalent*, or something of an equal value — given by way of exchange. For in such a sense, the price of salvation is of infinite value. For "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" It is not redeemed with such "corruptible things as silver and

gold — but with the precious blood of Christ.” In such a sense of the term, too, it is purchased for us already : and we can have it, “without money and *without price.*” But the price in the text has regard to what we have ourselves to do, to get our title to this “purchased possession :” that is, to comply with the conditions of salvation.

To say that this price is *in the hand* of a fool, to get wisdom, is virtually to assert that the sinner has all needful ability to secure salvation. If, as some assert, he has *no* such power, I see not how the language of the text can be true. It seems to me, that if the text teaches anything, it teaches what all, but the most ultra of Calvinists, believe, viz., that all gospel sinners could comply with the conditions of salvation, *if they would.*

But there is another clause in the text which demands our attention. “Seeing he hath no heart to it.” In these words, it is virtually declared, that though the sinner has power, he has *no disposition* to obtain salvation. The

word "heart" is used here, as it often is, both in Scripture and in common discourse, to signify the permanent inclination of the soul. To say a man has no heart for a thing, is to say he has no taste or relish for it, consequently no desire to obtain it. But the sinner is not only wanting in inclination, he is positively averse to salvation. This aversion is often asserted in God's Word. "But my people *would not* hearken to my voice; and Israel *would none* of me. So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools *despise* wisdom and instruction." "They that do evil, hate the light, neither come to it, lest their deeds should be reprov'd." "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." And elsewhere sinners are said to "refuse and rebel," and to "reject the kingdom of God against themselves." We see, then, that while they have all needful ability and means for securing salvation, they are utterly unwilling to do so.

Having now ascertained the meaning of each word and phrase in the text, let us consider next its peculiar pith and power. The whole weight of its meaning will be found to rest on the single word "wherefore." "*Wherefore* is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?" Here a momentous and solemn question is propounded. The question is, *Why* does God afford to sinners all needful opportunity of becoming Christians, and thus of securing salvation, while they are totally averse to it? And certainly there is great occasion for such an inquiry. For God *has* done much; much also is he *still* doing, to enable sinners to "lay hold on eternal life."

It is at infinite expense, that God has provided this price for sinners to get wisdom. Much had to be done to make salvation *possible*. An atonement had to be made. And for this the Son of God had to "lay aside his most divine array," to vacate his throne in heaven, come down to earth, and become the persecuted Babe of Bethlehem, to lead a life of wandering, toil,

and sorrow, and to become so poor, that he "had not where to lay his head." For this he had to groan in Gethsemane, "sweating drops of blood," and "sorrowing unto death." For this he had to be unjustly condemned by Caiaphas and Pilate; to be mocked, scourged and spit upon. And more than all these, he had to "bear our sins in his own body," while enduring the accursed death of the cross. And still is he doing much to enable sinners to secure this great salvation. For this he is proclaiming this salvation by his printed and preached word, as well as by many other means of grace. Thus is he affording them all needful instruction, and is entreating and warning them to flee from the wrath to come. He is also sustaining their lives, while reason asks, "Wherefore do the wicked live? and justice cries, "Cut them down: why cumber they the ground?" He sends afflictions "for their profit, that they may be partakers of his holiness." He lavishes his blessings upon them, that "his goodness may lead them to repentance." Above all, he sends

his Holy Spirit, to set home with the greater power, the wooings and warnings of his providence and Word.

The conditions on which salvation is offered are the easiest which the well-being of the universe would allow God to name. They are repentance and faith, both of which are essential to his moral government. Repentance, as we have shown, is a purpose to cease from sin, and to live ever after in obedience to God. And who does not see that, if he should pardon sinners while they are persisting in rebellion, he would encourage such rebellion, and thus would paralyze his own authority throughout his moral universe? Nor could the pardoned themselves be happy, till they ceased to rebel. Thus, too, does faith need to be insisted on, because it involves the acknowledgment of sin as so great an evil that nothing but the blood of Christ can atone for it; and thus dissuades from it: and because it "works by love, purifying the heart and overcoming the world."

And not only are these conditions *necessary* :

they are *easy*. They are such, that sinners could easily comply with them, if they had a "heart to it." The way of salvation is so plain, that "wayfaring men, though fools, need not err therein." And the Lord affords so much aid by his providence, Word and Spirit, that he well inquires, "What more could I have done to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" The conditions of life, then, are *easy*. But mistake me not. I do not say that sinners need not struggle and "strive to enter in at the straight gate." I know that many have to "agonize" in doing so. Yet I say, the difficulties with which they have to contend are not *in the way itself*, but in their own hearts. This may be illustrated by the conduct of a froward child. He has carried off his mother's scissors, and is doing mischief with them. She commands him to return them forthwith; but in a fit of anger he throws them on the floor. She repeats her command, and threatens the rod. But this only increases his anger and stubbornness. As he stands pouting and puffing in

wrath and wretchedness, how hard it is to stoop and take those scissors to his mother. But what makes it so difficult? Not *his weakness* or *their weight*, but his own froward spirit. If his own heart were right, how much easier were it to obey with cheerfulness than to rebel in surliness and ire.

But "wherefore" is God doing so much for the salvation of sinners, while they are so unwilling to secure it? Why all this expenditure of divine power and goodness, apparently to no purpose? Surely, such a question deserves profound attention.

But a question very different from this is asked by many. They inquire, why God does not give both the price to get wisdom, and the heart to improve it? They complain, because he only gives them those means and opportunities by which they might easily obtain salvation, if they only *would*: insisting that he should likewise give them a disposition rightly to employ them. Of this complaint, let reason and candor judge. What claim of favor have *they*

on God, who for their sins deserve his indignation and wrath? Evidently, none at all. What he has done to make their salvation *possible* is an infinite gratuity. And all he is now doing to urge and aid them in securing this salvation is grace, *rich* grace. What heaven-daring effrontery, then, to complain, that *more* is not done. How can they claim more, when they deserve nothing at all? — nothing but indignation and wrath. The complaint is most absurd and preposterous. They have no heart or disposition to do what would secure eternal life: and yet they complain that God does not make them do it. They choose to go on in the way to death, and yet blame God for letting them have their choice. What more can they claim, or even *ask*, than to have it in their power to “get” what they need? And all this they have. The full price of wisdom or eternal life is in their hands — and has been there long. If, then, they fail to use it, and thereby perish, whose fault is it? When a pardon is signed and sealed, offered and urged upon a criminal,

and he freely refuses it, may he complain that the executive did not *make him willing* to receive it?

But the question returns: "*Wherefore* is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom?" For God does put this *price* into the hands of many: yes, and he keeps it there for many months and years, while they have no heart to improve it. And he has momentous and solemn reasons for doing so. Nor is it a matter of little importance to inquire why he is acting thus. Let us look, then, at some of these reasons. But, by the way, we shall find them very different from those which many have supposed. Many seem to think he does it out of *justice* to sinners; and that it would have been unrighteous in God, if he had left them without a way of escape from his threatened and righteous wrath. But he was under no obligation to provide even an atonement. If he had left fallen man, as he did fallen angels, not a murmur would have been heard in all his holy universe. This is a provision which *mercy* may ask; but

justice, never. Rather would justice *forbid* it. Much less, then, does it *require* all that aid to salvation which is comprehended in that "price" which is in the hands of sinners for securing salvation. What! when a man deserves a punishment, must his government provide him a way of escape from it? This price, then, is not provided because justice demands it: and we have yet to ask, *Wherefore?*

The great, primary, leading and general reason for putting this price into the hands of sinners must be, to secure their salvation. The entire plan of redemption requires such aid and opportunities to be afforded. In accordance with the whole structure of his moral government, God purposes to save *all* those, and *only* those who freely accept salvation on the terms of repentance and faith. Therefore, he must needs afford them such opportunities as shall make that acceptance practicable. Many who hold this price of wisdom with no present disposition to improve it, are yet to be brought, through interposing grace, to "make their

calling and election sure." And it is easy to see why this neglected, despised and abused price was kept in *their* hands so long. It is, that God's long-suffering mercy may redound to his greater glory by their more signal salvation. Oh, how many will have occasion to sing his praise the louder, because he has waited on them so long, to be gracious.

This answers the question as to those who are to be eventually saved. But here a more difficult question meets the mind. Many who have this price in hand will *never* improve it. And God, who "knoweth all things," *foresees* that they never will. And now the question is, Wherefore is there a price in the hand of *such*, to get wisdom? This may prove to be a question of fearful moment to some who now hear me. They may be hoping, that by and by, somehow or other, they shall be willing to accept of offered mercy, while God sees they never, *never* will. To them, then, the question why God continues to them the day of grace and the means of salvation, is indeed a fearful

one. Let me entreat each sinner, then, to ponder it most solemnly.

The only prominent reason which I can conceive of, wherefore God continues this price in the hands of those who never will improve it is, *that he may make to the universe a fuller display of his justice and mercy.* If any other reason can be given, I would be happy to hear of it. But I can conceive of none. Nor do I insist, that the one now named is directly or definitely announced in the Word of God. Yet it seems to be *indirectly* and *virtually* taught in many places there. Those who are to be finally lost are left of God to act themselves out freely, in view of his commands and threatenings, his invitations and promises, according to their own hearts' desires: and then he rewards them accordingly. Having made all needful provisions for their salvation, he entreats them to glorify him by accepting and enjoying it. But he is not to be robbed of his glory by their refusal. If they will not glorify him, in the enjoyment of his mercy, they must glorify him in the endurance of his wrath.

“He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness” — a day when he will “bring every secret thing into judgment,” and “reward every man according to his works.” And then the universe will see how great has been his grace, as well as how perfect his justice to the children of men. And as to those who have long held the price of salvation, and have perished because they would not improve it, all will see that, as the Apostle says, God “endured, with much long-suffering, these vessels of wrath that are fitted for destruction” — *fitted* the more emphatically by their neglect and abuse of his saving grace. It will be seen that his patience was wonderful, that his mercy was amazing. It will show he was “not willing that any should perish;” and that he took vengeance on the impenitent *only when their persevering rejection of salvation compelled him to do so*. At the same time it will show the aggravated guilt of those who perish notwithstanding the offers and urgencies of gospel grace, showing that they deserve the

greater damnation. And thus it will render more signal, and more glorious that justice which consigns them to the "perdition of ungodly men." It is the long-suffering and amazing grace of God toward those who perish in despite of all that he has done to save them, and his final vengeance on them, that will call out the loudest acclamations of praise from a holy universe: acclamations closing with the chorus of "Alleluiah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Yes: and these things too, will awake the loudest wail in all the pit of hell.

Whenever sinners think at all on the terrors of the world of woe, they seem to suppose that they owe all their fearfulness to the violations of God's moral law. But it is not so. It is the *Gospel*, and not the law — the *Gospel*, with its provisions and offers of life, its entreaties and urgencies to escape from death, that will be to the lost, the most painful object of their contemplation in that dark world. For they will see, as they look back to earth, that while heaven was forfeited by sin, but might have been

secured by repentance and faith, yet by their voluntary and pertinacious impenitence and unbelief, they have been all their lives long refusing it. They will see, not only that their doom is *just*, but that if they have been resolute and persevering in anything through life, it has been in keeping themselves under this doom to death and woe: that at any moment during life — and that perhaps a long one — they might, by one single step, have secured salvation, but would not: and would not, simply because they were so much attached to sin and opposed to holiness. And thus they will see that they perish only because they have spent all their lives in opposing their own salvation.

My fellow sinners, this certainly is a subject which you should now most solemnly consider. No subject on earth should so deeply concern you. You have long had this price in your hands. Ample provisions have been made for your salvation. Christ has died for *you*, that you, by believing in him, “might not perish, but have eternal life.” For you the feast of

grace has been spread. And long and loudly has mercy called, "Come, for all things are now ready." Yes, on God's part, *all* things needful to your salvation are ready now, and have been long. All that is lacking, in order to make your salvation sure, is on your part. Nor do you lack *ability*. It is only a "heart to it," "a willing mind," that is wanting. You need only to consent to be saved in that only and easy way which God could provide. It is only to resolve to give up those sins which have brought you nothing but wretchedness and ruin; to walk in the ways of "pleasantness and peace;" and to trust in Christ for pardon and life: all which you could do with infinite ease, if you had but the consent of your own wills. What, then, can you ask more?

Do you ask the aid of the Holy Spirit? In my opinion, you have enough of it already to bring you to repentance and faith, if you did not resist that influence. I believe the persuasions of the Word and Spirit of God would press you at once through the straight gate of

life, if you did not brace yourselves against them. Nor should you expect any more of this influence till you put yourselves in a proper posture to receive it. How insulting to resist what you have, and then ask for more. Nay, beware how you quench that Spirit any longer, lest you grieve him away entirely and forever. Yet you insist, perhaps, that you wish the Spirit's influence in sufficient measures to *overcome* your opposition. But such a desire you can never have. You may, and probably do see your *need* of such influence. But still you cannot *wish* it. You cannot choose to have your choice opposed and overcome. That were to choose contraries at the same time, which is impossible.

No, my fellow sinners, let me tell you plainly and honestly, although I would do it with all affection and tenderness, if you have any feeling about receiving *more* of the Spirit's influence, it is the feeling of fear: and not a fear that you will have *too little* to secure your salvation, but *too much* to allow you to continue on in your

chosen and cherished sins. I know not that you feel any anxiety at all about it. But if you have *some* distress or solemnity on the subject of your salvation, and have not already resolved to comply with its conditions without delay, you are secretly resolving to go on still longer in sin. And the more the Word and Spirit of God are pressing you to forsake this dangerous way, the more do you brace yourselves in resistance against them. You say within yourselves, "It is true, this is a solemn subject, and these are powerful arguments and warnings. *But*, I am not going to be overcome by them; for I am not yet ready to leave the sins I love." It is thus that all awakened sinners fight against their own salvation, till they conquer their convictions, or else yield to them, and "enter into life."

Deceive not yourselves, dear sinners, with the too common notion, that you have a *wish* to be *willing* to comply with the offers of mercy. The text teaches you that you have *none*: "no heart to it." And, if you would examine

yourselves faithfully, you would be *conscious* you had none. Doubtless you wish to escape divine wrath. But not in the way which God has provided. If you were willing to be saved in *his* way, you *would* be saved at once. Doubtless, too, you are convinced of the *importance* of salvation. But this does not alter the inclination of your heart. Your reason, judgment, conscience, may all declare in favor of immediate repentance and faith. But these are the workings only of your *understandings*. They are but portions of that price which is put into your hands to get wisdom; while the inclination of your hearts is in direct opposition to them. And this evil inclination you *will* follow. Men should be guided by the dictates of reason, enlightened by revelation. And if you would do so, you would secure salvation at once. But you refuse to take that course which Scripture and conscience tell you is the only way of happiness and safety. You *will* follow the perverse, headlong inclination of your wicked hearts. And in this is all your

difficulty: yes, and in this is all your *danger*. Since, then, you so deliberately and pertinaciously refuse to improve your ample, your all-sufficient means and opportunities of grace, to the saving of your soul, you need to ponder the question of the text with intense and solemn attention. Instead of captiously inquiring why more aids are not afforded, you have occasion to wonder why so many are afforded you, and have been continued so long. You have reason to fear, that those now enjoyed will soon be removed, because you fail to improve them in securing salvation: or that, if continued, they will only be the occasion of your "treasuring up unto yourselves the greater wrath against the day of wrath."

Your present delay to enter into life is proof *probable* that you will *always* delay: for you will always have as good reasons for delay; and, left to yourselves, you will always have the same inclination to delay. There is a fearful probability, then, that God is keeping the price of wisdom in your hands with no expecta-

tion that you will be saved ; and doing it, therefore, that he may make a fuller demonstration to the universe of his long-suffering grace not only, but of his more signal and glorious justice in your final perdition. For, if you will persevere in the rejection of life, what but this dreadful purpose can there be left to him? Oh sinner, if you would not make the present grace of God a source of eternal and unutterable anguish in the world of woe, delay no longer to accept of salvation.

SERMON XV.

THE GOSPEL AN IMMENSE LOSS OR AN IMMENSE GAIN.

“For, we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?” — 2 Cor. 2: 15, 16.

Paul speaks, in these words, of himself, and of his brethren in the ministry. What he says is therefore applicable to all faithful ministers. All, then, who preach Christ faithfully “are unto God a sweet savor of Christ.” This “savor,” fragrance, or perfume alludes to the “holy

anointing oil," which was a compound of the oil of olives and certain fragrant spices, and which was poured upon the priests, at their consecration. — Ex. 30: 23–30: or to the frankincense and other aromatics which were offered in the Jewish sacrifices. Such ministers are a sweet savor of Christ to God, in that they faithfully hold forth *him* who "hath given himself for us, an offering, a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savor." — Eph. 5: 2.

Yet this savor, or perfume, is said to be both "in them that are saved, and in them that perish." It is so, in that Christ is offered to both — offered alike to all, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." He is equally acceptable to God, whether his atonement is received or rejected by men. Yes, and he will be equally *glorified*, whether the offered salvation is accepted or not; for he is not to be robbed of his glory by the sinner's refusal of eternal life. And on this account, the ministers who preach Christ faithfully are equally acceptable to God, and can equally triumph in the Lord,

whether successful or unsuccessful in their labors for the salvation of their fellow-men.

But the truth in the text that mainly concerns us is, that the gospel has a *vastly different effect on different individuals*. To some, it is "a savor of life unto life," and to others, "a savor of death unto death." While with some it eventuates in their salvation, with others it eventuates in their greater guilt, and their deeper damnation. Not that its aim or tendency is to lead any one down to woe. It is the word of life, and not of death. Its object and adaptation is to bring men from death unto life. And the opposite effect is produced by the sinner's *rejection* of it. He becomes the more guilty, and thereby exposed to a much sorer punishment, "by the greater light against which he sins," and the more mercy which he abuses.

Prompted by a view of these solemn considerations, Paul exclaims, "And who is sufficient for these things?" We may suppose he meant to express, in these words, the greatness of the

work of the ministry, and the greatness of its results: consequently, the great amount of power and grace which ministers of the Gospel need. And well might he do so: for with what energy, caution and perseverance must they labor, in order to meet divine acceptance, and be "a sweet savor of Christ unto God!" But it seems to me that the like exclamation might be made with equal propriety by those who listen to their messages of mercy. Considering the different and momentous results which follow from these messages, well might they exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" The one topic, therefore, which the text suggests to my mind is,

The solemn responsibility, both of those who *preach* and of those who *hear* the Gospel.

Who, then, is sufficient for the ministry of the Gospel? It is employed on themes most lofty and profound—themes, too, of infinite moment. The work is most arduous and difficult: and one whose results are infinitely delightful, or infinitely dreadful: while much de-

pende on the way in which the work is done, whether it prove "a savor of life unto life," or of "death unto death." The minister needs, then, no little preparation of head and of heart, in order that his work may be "well done." He needs much knowledge and judgment, tact and skill, as well as much faith, love, and zeal. To reprove and warn the wicked with sufficient faithfulness, and yet to do it without a needless and injurious harshness, also to adapt his instructions to each, so as to render them most inoffensive, yet most effective, is no easy task. Since, then, their souls are so precious, and since so much depends on his faithfulness, whether they are saved or lost, how much, how cautiously, and how long must he labor with them, before he can say with safety, that he is "free from their blood?"

Every right-minded minister must feel a vast amount of anxiety, as to the result of his labors. And if his heart is suitably set on the salvation of his people, he will feel an inexpressible joy on seeing any of them "pass from death unto

life;" while equally great will be his grief on finding that any of them are sealing their own damnation. It is true, that he is not accountable for their perdition, provided he has done his whole duty to them. Still, the thought of it will be peculiarly distressing to him, on account of his ministerial relation to them. And he will still be liable to great distress, for fear that he has not done all he could toward "pulling them out of the fire."

It is true, too, that the faithful minister can "triumph in Christ," as did the Apostle, in the context, though to some of his people his ministrations prove "a savor of death unto death." And this is a rich consolation to those who, after all their ministerial fidelity, have occasion to inquire, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" But the Apostle did not triumph in the thought that his ministrations issued in the aggravated damnation of any. No: it was in the thought that he had done his duty to them, and therefore that God would accept of what he had

done to save them, and would be glorified in it, though they be lost forever. And so will it be with every devoted servant of the Lord. He will not only mourn over those who perish, but will have great anxiety for those who seem to have secured salvation; for fear they may show, by their after-conduct, that they "have neither part nor lot in this matter." Said one Apostle, "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the faith." And said another, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

Since, then, the preaching of the Gospel is so arduous and difficult—since it is so important that it be done with great exactness, as well as great energy and perseverance, since it is attended with immense consequences, either joyous or sorrowful; and since it involves most solemn responsibility and intense anxiety, well may the minister exclaim, with the Apostle, "Who is sufficient for these things?" How cautious, and strenuous, and untiring he needs to be, in his labors of love. And how much he

needs to look aloft, for wisdom, and strength, and courage in his work, lest some souls be lost through his neglect.

The foregoing thoughts address themselves to my own mind with a peculiar power, in this connection. I am coming to the close of my labors in regard to these discourses, and perhaps as regards the whole of my public ministry. And it behoves me, in such circumstances, to consider, whether I have been faithful to my Master, and faithful to those for whose salvation he has sent me to minister. Nor does it require a long review to ascertain, that in many things I have come short. For though I have occasion to bless God that some hundreds appear to have been converted under my ministry, I have reason to fear that many, very many, will be lost through my unfaithfulness. For, had I been at all times as watchful for opportunities to warn and entreat the impenitent to seek salvation, and as faithful to improve them as I ought to have been, the probability is, that I might have been the means, in the

hand of God, of persuading many more to flee from final wrath. And I would that this review might quicken me to suitable endeavors for "redeeming the time."*

But, as respects this course of sermons, I cannot regard myself as very delinquent. Although I wish they were more attractive, instructive, and persuasive, I have done what I could in them to show the impenitent their guilt and danger, and their only way of escape; as also the importance of escaping, without delay. My object has been to render the subject of

* While I was yet living under the paternal roof, a youth called at my father's, on his way West. I afterwards learned that he had become a minister of the Gospel, and that his ministry was greatly blessed. At length I met with him. And on making myself known to him, he said, "I have desired to see you more than any other man. Do you recollect, that when I spent a night at your father's, you took me one side, and urged me to become a Christian?" I told him I had no recollection of doing so. "Well, you did," said he; "and that is the reason that I am now preaching the Gospel." And this announcement filled me, not only with joy, but self-reproach. For it suggested to me that I had had many like opportunities to "speak a word in season;" but had not improved them: whereas, if I had been equally faithful on all these occasions, I might have been, by the blessing of God, the means of bringing many more to salvation; some of whom might have become ministers of the Gospel, numbering *their* hundreds of converts.

man's ruin and recovery as simple and plain as possible, and I hope I have so far succeeded as to leave the sinner, in this respect, without excuse. At the same time, I have endeavored to avoid all the harshness and severity that needlessly offends. In short, I have aimed to make these discourses, as much as possible, "a sweet savor of Christ unto God," and of "life unto life," to all who shall give them attention.

But on closing these labors, I am seized with the painful apprehension that they may prove to many "a savor of death unto death;" consequently, that all I have done to simplify and elucidate the way of salvation, and to persuade them to enter it, will but aggravate their guilt, and deepen their damnation. Such an event I should grievously deplore. I should be far from satisfied, that my ministrations were "unto God a sweet savor of Christ." I would have them also "a savor of life unto life," to my impenitent readers. And this induces me to urge the more earnestly upon them the remaining portion of our subject, viz :

The solemn responsibility of those who *hear* the Gospel.

My fellow sinners, you to whom the word of salvation is sent, have, in some respects, a far more fearful accountability than those have who address it to you in the name of the Lord. You have, therefore, no less occasion than they to exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" If they deal faithfully with you, they will rejoice and "triumph" forever, in their labors for you, even though these labors should be to you "a savor of death unto death;" thus immensely increasing your guilt and your woe. Not that they will rejoice in your damnation. Far from it. They will rejoice only that they have striven faithfully to keep you from perdition, and that their efforts to do so are acceptable to God, and will promote his glory. But as for you, how much greater must be your woe, if you turn a deaf ear to all their instructions, entreaties and warnings, and rush to destruction. For, the higher toward heaven you are exalted by the preaching of the Gospel, the

deeper will be your destruction, by rejecting it. Of those who refuse his messages of mercy, the Savior says, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin." Thus teaching that their previous sins are as nothing compared with that of refusing his offers of eternal life. You see, then, that while you are hearing the ministrations of the Gospel, your position is one of awful responsibility. For you will be immensely more happy, or immensely more miserable, for having these labors bestowed upon you; and it is left for yourselves to say, whether this happiness or this woe shall be your final destiny. How momentous, then, the alternative that hangs on your decision.

You have, indeed, been told, that the Gospel, though ministered ever so faithfully, may prove "a savor of death unto death;" and yet that this same Gospel is acceptable to God, and will redound to his glory. But this truth will not in the least relieve you of your fearful responsibility. It is neither the tendency nor the aim of the Gospel to work out your de-

struction, but the contrary. You will not be consigned to a deeper damnation because this Gospel has been *preached* to you, but because you neglect and abuse it. It is not its treatment of *you*, but your treatment of *it*, that will decide and enhance your condemnation. Nor is the Lord pleased with your perdition, in itself considered. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." And therefore he sends his ministers, to warn and entreat you to escape from it. For they "are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by them, they pray you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God." Yet none of these things will mitigate, but vastly aggravate your eternal anguish, if you reject salvation. As you sit in the dark cell of your final prison-house, and reflect forever on the much that has been done to keep you from coming there, how much fuel it will add to the fire then burning within you. For you will see, that in proportion to the much that has been done to save you, will be your folly and guilt in refusing

salvation. And, perhaps, you will then recollect, that you not only refused to be won by the warnings and the entreaties of gospel grace, but that your struggles against them were violent and long. So much sorer, then, will be your endless remorse and sorrow. Perhaps, too, you will have to recollect, that while the messengers of mercy were most earnest, and solemn, and tender, in urging you to life, then it was that you were most indignant against them and their messages of grace. Some are excited to no little wrath, abuse and blasphemy, by urgent persuasives to flee from final woe. And if such has been the case with you, how agonizing may be the recollection of it in the world of final despair.

Nor will these painful reflections be slightly aggravated by the fact that God so highly approves of the earnestness and energy with which ministers have sought to save the impenitent from going down to the pit. For the lost will see, that while they have hated and vilified these ministers the more on account of

their fidelity, the more love and praise will God bestow. And, perhaps, to see the triumphs of God and of his ministers, in regard to what they have done to save you, is what will inflict the deepest stings of anguish which you will feel in the world of woe." Then "who is sufficient for these things? "Can thine heart endure, or thine hand be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee?" — Ez. 22 : 14.

In concluding this course of sermons, I would urge upon your attention your peculiar *danger* : the danger of making the Gospel "a savor of death unto death" to your own souls — a danger that is the greater because you feel yourselves so safe. Some of you feel the safer, I suppose, because you are surrounded by so many institutions and influences of gospel grace. You may be confidently hoping that these will bring you to salvation, some time before you die. And yet the fact, that you have lived so long unbenefitted in the midst of these high privileges, is what makes your salvation, in certain respects, the more difficult and

doubtful. As they have not been able to bring you to salvation *heretofore*, how can you expect them to do it *hereafter*?

The due and direct tendency of the truth is, to *soften* the heart; but resistance hardens it. And the more the truth is resisted, the more the heart is hardened. It is in its first onsets that truth exerts its greatest power. For, then it has the aid of novelty and surprise. And, if it can be effectually resisted at first, it can be afterwards more easily resisted. For it loses its interest and power by repetition, while the heart is growing harder. The longer, then, you have withstood the warnings and entreaties of the Gospel, the greater will be both your ability and disposition to do so. And as they could not overcome your reluctance in time past, how can you expect them to do it in time to come? No: the dreadful probability is, that this Gospel, instead of proving "a savor of life unto life" to you, will prove doubly "a savor of death unto death:" since, by hitherto resisting it, you have increased both your desert

of damnation and the probability of your suffering it.

Another way in which your danger is increased is, by exhausting the patience, and by augmenting the wrath of God. For the greater the light and love against which you sin, the more do you weary his long suffering, and provoke his "hot displeasure." And as you have been so long doing so, by disregarding the instructions and invitations of the Gospel, how much reason you have to fear that soon he will "swear in his wrath that you shall not enter into his rest." For, the greater your guilt, the louder does justice call for your condemnation. And there is a bound beyond which the patience and mercy of God will not reach. Yes, there is a measure of time and of transgression, which, if you pass, the saving grace of God will not follow you. This limit of the divine forbearance cannot be ascertained by you: yet it is unalterably fixed in the purpose of God. And your ignorance of it does but make your case the more dangerous and dreadful. For you know

not but you are just now arriving at this fatal limit. And if you do arrive there, you will be "cut down as a cumberer of the ground," according to the consent of mercy herself, as expressed in the parable of the barren fig-tree.— Luke 13: 9. And sometimes the blow falls most unexpectedly, according to the declaration, "He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall *suddenly* be destroyed, and that without remedy."—Prov. 29: 1. Or if God should spare your lives, he will withdraw from you the strivings of his Spirit, and perhaps the means of grace. And "wo unto you, when he departs from you."—Hosea 9: 12. For if you are left to yourselves, you will be as certainly lost as if you were already in the pit: not because you *could* not, but because you certainly *would* not repent. For, if you will not resolve to leave your sins while the Spirit of God is striving with you, much less will you do it when he has utterly forsaken you. But as yet "the Spirit and the Bride say, come." To-day, then, after so long a time—to-day, why will you not hear his voice, and no longer

harden your hearts? Why will you not seize on this accepted time, which may be your only day of salvation, to lay hold on eternal life?

A great share of gospel sinners are intending, and evidently *expecting* to repent and be saved at some *future season*. They are *fully determined*, they say, to secure salvation; and are only *delaying* the concern *for the present*. Probably it is so with you. But *why* this delay? Probably you will say, with the many, you are waiting for *a more convenient season*. *A more convenient season*. Ah! little do you think how insulting is this excuse to that God who is holding you out of hell by the brittle thread of life, that he may give you an opportunity to believe and be saved. What right have you to consult your own convenience, in a matter of so much moment? To do so, is to outrage both the majesty and the mercy of your God. Although he has an infinite abhorrence of your course of iniquity, he still holds you in life, and says, "O do not continue this abominable thing that I hate."—Jer. 44: 4. And ~~you make the insulting reply,~~ "I am going to

able thing that I hate."—Jer. 44: 4. And you make the insulting reply, "I am going to cease; but shall consult my own convenience, as to when I shall cease." What would you think of a fellow man who was doing you a grievous injury, and who, on your requesting him to desist, should give you a similar reply? But yours is the more heinous, as it is a contempt not only of God's justice, but of his saving grace. He urges you to desist, that you may escape eternal wrath and secure eternal bliss. What matchless effrontery, then, to reply that you will do so, but will take your own time for it. It is not *your* convenience, but *his*, that should be consulted. And he tells you that his convenient season is the present. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

By this excuse, too, you deny the wisdom and the truth of God. He tells you the present is the *best* time, because it is the only time of which you are sure. He tells you, "*To-day*, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart."

Ps. 95. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

Prov. 27. "For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them." —

Eccl. 9. "Agree with thine adversary *quickly*, while thou art in the way with him; lest at *any time* the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison." — Mat. 5. "There-

fore, be ye also ready: for in *such an hour as ye think not*, the Son of Man cometh." — Mat.

24. But while God thus positively and repeatedly affirms the present to be the best time, you practically deny it; and thus are doing much to provoke him to *prove* his wisdom and your folly, by your "sudden destruction, and that without remedy."

But *why* do you think the present is an inconvenient season? Is it because religion would interfere with your aspirations after the

pleasures, riches and honors of the world? It has been shown, in a foregoing discourse, that true piety *promotes*, rather than prevents the acquirement of all those that are worth possessing: and that as to those that are forbidden, the time will never come when it will not interfere with them. Or do you think the present is an inconvenient time, because you are so crowded with the cares and labors of life, that you have no *leisure* to seek salvation? I say again, then, that salvation can be secured without interfering at all with your needful labors and cares about your worldly interests: and that these labors and cares will increase, instead of diminishing. If, then, they necessarily hinder your salvation *now*, they will *always* do so. And you must see that no worldly employment or interest is worthy to be compared with that of securing the infinite blessedness of the life to come. Or perhaps you hope that somehow or other it will be more easy hereafter to give up your sins and turn to God, than it is at present. But it is all a delusion. Your hearts

are growing harder and harder, through the deceitfulness of sin. And your attachment to sin is growing stronger and stronger, by the law of habit.

The hope of a more convenient season is the deadliest delusion that you can entertain. For there is no rational probability that it will ever come. Generally speaking, your opportunities will be less and less favorable. Early youth is the most favorable time; and difficulties increase with age. Nor would you be likely to improve the better time, if it should arrive. For never does the sinner seek salvation successfully *because he thinks the opportunity a convenient one*. No: never will he strive effectually to enter into the strait gate till he feels that, convenient or inconvenient, he must do it at once, and with all his heart; or rather till he loses all thought of a more convenient season. And if you persist in waiting for such a season, you will certainly perish.

Many seem to think, that if they had no purpose at all about escaping final wrath, their

danger would be great: but as they are fully determined to repent before death, they are quite safe. And this, perhaps, is your position. But a more perilous one can scarcely be conceived. The stronger your confidence of safety, the greater your danger. The more you rely on your resolution to repent *hereafter*, the less you are disposed to repent at present. As you hush your present fears, by the hope of seeking salvation *at some future season*, it is the more difficult to persuade you to seek it *now*. Thus you are in the greater danger of dying in impenitence. And what does your purpose to repent *hereafter* amount to? In effect, it is nothing more than a resolution, *not* to repent *at present*. And you have only to *continue* this resolution to insure damnation. Of all the devices of Satan, none are more crafty, and none more deadly, than that of tempting you to rely upon the resolution of future repentance. I believe it has peopled the world of woe with more gospel sinners than any other delusion. Millions of these lost ones resolved on earth as

firmly as you now resolve, that they would be careful to repent and believe at a future season. This resolution failed them. And what reason have you to expect that the same resolution will not fail *you*? *Once* they were where you are *now*—having precisely the same purpose and the same hope. Oh, beware, then, lest hereafter you be where they are now, bewailing in hell your trust in this fatal resolution. Oh, why will you not escape their doom, by now resolving that you will enter at once the strait gate of life.

I will offer but one more proof of your danger. It is, *the present opposition* of your hearts to the conditions of salvation. Of this opposition you must be conscious, on turning your thoughts inward. If you have attended sufficiently to the foregoing discourses, you must have found ample evidence that religion would not impair or impede those pleasures, riches and honors of earth that are most valuable; but would rather promote them: consequently, it would advance your *present* as well as your eternal welfare, to

become Christians without delay. And perhaps you are convinced of it already, and therefore have a kind of wish that you had already passed from death unto life. Then why not repent and believe at once? Ah, here comes the reason: you have such a strong dislike to repentance and faith, that you think you cannot exercise them *now*. To resolve that you will now and forever forsake all your wrong feelings and conduct, and to trust entirely in the righteousness of Christ for justification, thereby virtually acknowledging that you deserve divine wrath, and cannot merit deliverance from it — oh, this is what your sin-loving and proud hearts utterly revolt from. You say, therefore, you cannot repent and believe *now*; but hope you can *hereafter*. And here is your greatest danger — the hope that it will be easier at some future time to comply with these conditions of salvation. But if you hate the way of salvation so much *now*, why may you not as much hereafter? You cannot find, or even fancy a single circumstance that is calculated to lessen

this hatred. But, on the contrary, you are taught, both by the Word of God and your own experience, that your hearts are more and more "hardened, through the deceitfulness of sin;" and more and more confirmed by habit, in opposition to vital and practical godliness. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." — Jer. 13: 23. The longer you continue in sin, the harder it will be to leave it. Many an aged sinner has, therefore, lamented, on his death-bed, that he did not give his heart to God in youth. Yes, and many, who hoped it would be more easy to repent when about to die, have died in despair, declaring they could not repent. No: if you cannot now comply with the conditions of salvation, you never can. Next month, and next year, should you live so long, you will find no less repugnance to them than you feel at the present moment. This native attachment to sin, and aversion to holiness, has got to be met, resisted and overcome, sooner or later, or you

cannot be saved. It is by thus denying yourselves, and taking up your cross, that you are to take the *first* step in coming unto Christ. Then, why not do it now, when it can be done as easily as ever? Or rather, as the future is utterly uncertain, why not do it now, lest the hoped-for hereafter should never come?

And now, my impenitent friends, I must take my leave of you till we meet at the final bar of God. But I lament to part with you, till you are fully determined to "arise at once, and go to your Father." And why not come to this all-important resolution, before you lay this volume down? Can you conceive of a more appropriate time for making that one great decision on which your eternal destiny hangs? I beg of you to delay no longer, lest you exhaust the last drop of God's long-suffering; and he "swear in his wrath that you shall not enter into his rest." Come, rather, to that blessed resolution, which you will never regret; but over which you will always rejoice, both in time and eternity, "with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

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